

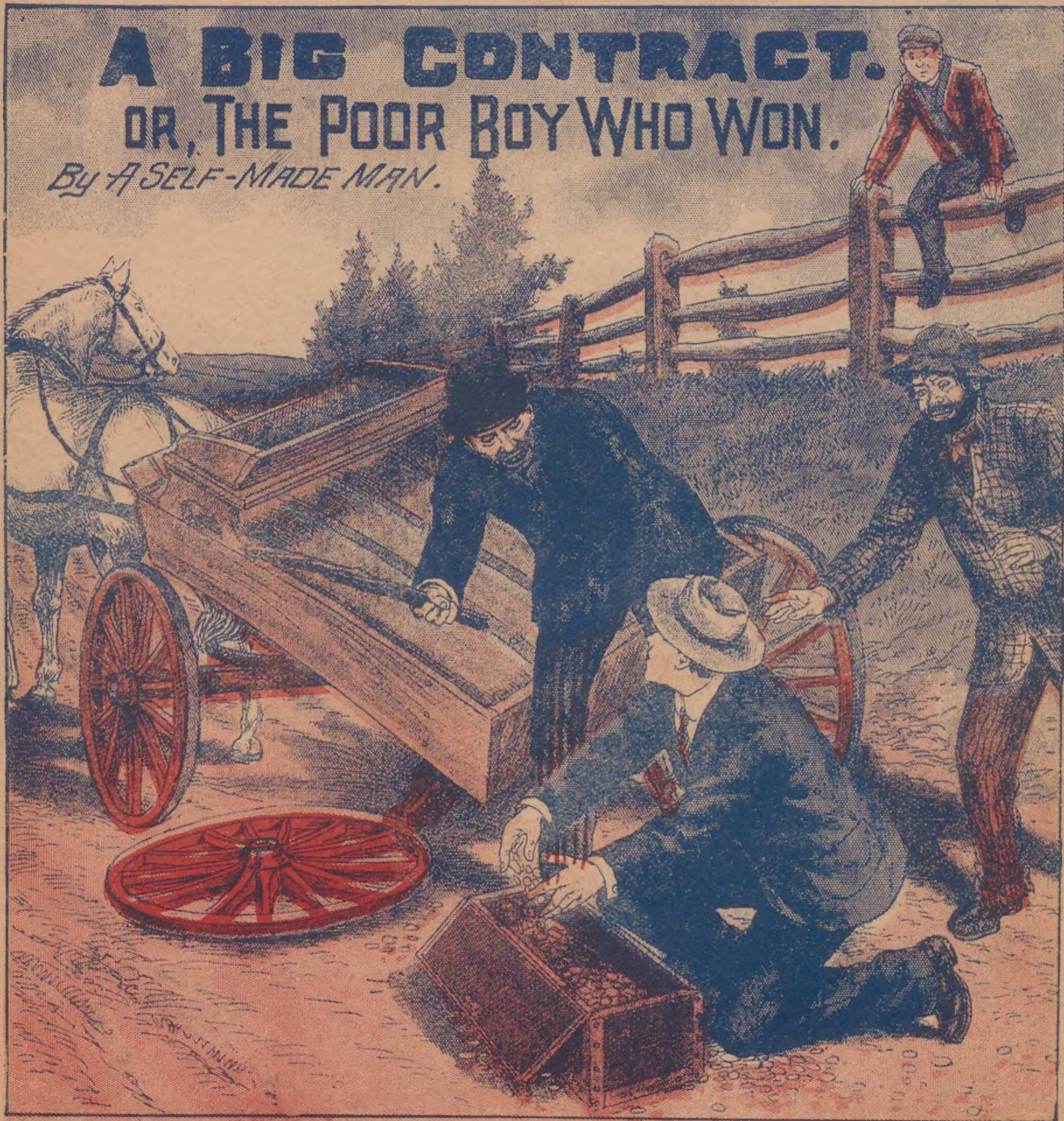
FAME --AND--

FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

A BIG CONTRACT. OR, THE POOR BOY WHO WON.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.



Harry was picking up the money and returning it to the box, when three tramps appeared on the scene. "We want that coin, kid!" cried one of them in a husky voice, as he shook a club at the boy.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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A BIG CONTRACT

OR, THE POOR BOY WHO WON

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I—The Hold-up That Missed Fire.

"He will pass this way in fifteen minutes. By cutting across the fields we have made sure of intercepting him at this lonesome spot. He cannot escape the pair of us, and the money he has drawn from the bank will put us on Easy Street for some time to come," said a tall, loosely jointed, ragged-looking man, known among his familiars as Lanky Luff.

"Good enough. If anybody needs the dough wuss than we do I'd like to know who he is," replied a short, thick-set ruffian named Sam Snare.

They were tough-looking customers, both of these men, and evidently bent on mischief. They stood under the wide-spreading branches of a tall oak tree, at the turn of a country road, and close behind them was a fence with a backing of wild bushes. Around them were tilled fields, with a farmhouse here and there, while some distance to the right rose the spire of a church, and the roofs of many houses, that indicated the presence of a village. It was late in the afternoon, and the low, descending sun threw long shadows across the quiet landscape. The two men believed themselves alone, and talked without restraint. As Sam Snare finished his remark the bushes behind the men were parted in a cautious way and a boy's face appeared framed in the tangled green shrubbery. His bright eyes rested on the rascals in a somewhat startled way, for he had heard their words and felt that something was about to happen.

"As soon as the wagon comes along you catch the horse by the head and I'll pull the old man off his seat," said Lanky Luff. "Then we'll go through his clothes. I saw him put the wallet into an inside pocket, so we know where to look for it."

"If he makes much of a squeal tip him a crack on his block. That'll keep him quiet," said Sam.

"I'll give him a squeeze on the windpipe. I've got the trick down fine. Then when we're done with him we'll toss him into the bushes and make off to town in the rig. That'll save us a long walk to the station."

"Good idea, Lanky. You've a great head for contrivin' things."

"It takes brains to succeed in our profession," grinned Luff.

"You've got 'em, pal. I'm proud to 'sociate with you."

"You watch how I do things and maybe some day you'll be able to turn a trick as good as me."

"It takes genius to do things wrong and keep out of jail," said Sam.

"You're right, Sam. I was born into the business. My old man was a swell second-story worker who would have made his fortune if a pal hadn't squealed on him. He was sent away for fifteen years and died in quod. My old woman had the confidence game down to perfection. If she'd stuck to business and let gin alone she'd have made a shinin' success. They learned me the rudiments, and I've been goin' it alone ever since I took French leave of the reformatory."

"I wish I could say as much, but I can't. The fact is——"

"Cork up. I hear the wagon. It'll be here inside of a minute. You'd better get into the middle of the road and pretend to be lookin' for somethin'. The old man'll rein in so as not to run over you. That'll give you an easy chance to grab the bridle, and as soon as you do it I'll get busy."

"That's a prime idea. What a head you've got, Lanky! You think of everything," said Sam, admiringly.

"You've got to be up to snuff if you want to do a job right. Now get out there. The wagon is close on us."

Sam Snare shuffled out into the road and began poking about in the dust with his cudgel. A moment later a light wagon, drawn by a sorrel horse of mild disposition, driven by an elderly man with a smoothly shaven face, tanned by exposure to the sun, hove in sight. Seeing Sam blocking the way the old man turned out of the middle of the road and pulled his horse in to a walk. That brought him nearer to the tree under which Lanky Luff stood watching his approach. Suddenly Sam rose up and grabbed the animal by the bridle rein. As he did so Luff rushed up, sprang on the hub of the wheel and

seizing the astonished driver, yanked him off his seat, and down into the dust with little ceremony.

"Now then, Sam, lend a hand," cried Luff, gripping the old man by the throat. "Fish out that wallet while I am holdin' him."

The thick-set rascal proceeded to do so. While the ruffians were absorbed in their nefarious business, out from the bushes crept a poorly-attired boy, with a stout tree-limb grasped in one hand.

A resolute expression rested on his features, and it was clear that it was his intention to go to the aid of the old man, who was struggling ineffectually in the strong grasp of Lanky Luff.

Realizing that his only chance of success against such odds was to surprise the scoundrels, the boy glided swiftly and noiselessly toward them. Getting within reach of them he raised his stick, swung it around his head and brought it down upon Luff.

Whack! Luff went down in a heap, pulling the old man with him, just as Sam Snare pulled the fat wallet out of his pocket.

"Drop that pocketbook!" cried the boy, threatening Sam with the stick.

Sam dodged and raised one of his arms to catch the stick as it fell. The boy's move had only been a feint, and seeing the man at a disadvantage he swung the stick around and smote him a resounding blow under his raised arm.

"Ouch!" howled Sam, springing aside.

He tripped over the old man's legs and went sprawling on his face. The wallet flew out of his fingers. The boy fetched him another whack across the shoulders that wrung a roar of pain from his lips, and then the lad slipped over, picked up the pocketbook and put it in his pocket.

"Now skip!" he cried to Sam, making a jab at him with the stick. Snare, seeing that his companion had been knocked out, and fearing that the affair might end in his capture, for he was rather lacking in sand, took to his heels and fled through the bushes into the fields, leaving Luff to his fate.

The boy flushed with victory watched his retreating figure for a moment, and then turned to assist the old man on his feet.

"I hope you're not hurt, sir," he said.

"I dunno, sonny. My throat feels pretty bad. This chap you knocked down most choked me. If it wasn't for you I'd have been robbed and p'haps murdered. I'm greatly obleeged to you. I dunno how you ever managed to beat them two men."

"I couldn't have done it if I hadn't taken them by surprise. After I laid this rascal out I then only had the other to tackle. If he'd been a fighter he might have got the better of me; but I took care not to give him much chance to reach me. I rattled him about the body with this stick so fast that it confused him, and finally he gave up the battle and ran away. You can see him yonder mounting a fence. He won't stop till he gets to cover somewhere."

"What's your name, sonny? I know 'most everybody 'round here, but I don't seem to recognize you. Stranger, aren't you?"

"Yes, I'm a stranger. My name is Harry Harmon."

"My name is Green—Jabez Green. I own the factory in the village. Have lived there these

thirty years or more. Might I ask what brings you into this neighborhood?"

"I'm making my way to Chicago."

"Chicago. That's some distance from here."

"I know it is; but I hope to get there in the course of time."

"Ain't you got no money to ride in the keers?"

"I've got a few dollars, but I want to save it to keep myself while I'm looking for work in the city."

"Are your parents dead?"

"Yes."

"Where do you hail from?"

"Quincy."

"Did you expect to put up at the village to-night?"

"Yes. I thought I might pay for supper and a night's lodging by doing some chores. That's the way I've been making out since I started."

"Well, you can stop with me. I owe you some-thing for savin' my money and p'haps my life."

Instinctively he put his hand into his inner pocket and discovered that his wallet was gone.

"Gracious!" he faltered. "That chap who ran away must have taken my pocketbook and the money with him. That's why he made off in such a hurry."

"No, he didn't, Mr. Green. Here is your wallet," said Harry.

The old man grabbed it eagerly.

"How did you get it away from him, for he must have taken it out of my pocket when the other chap was holdin' me?"

"He dropped it when he tripped over your legs trying to get out of reach of my stick. Then I picked it up and put it in my pocket."

"I'm much obleeged to you for savin' it. I reckon you'll stay with me a few days and rest up. You're welcome to do it, and it won't cost you nothin'. Maybe you'd like to go to work in my mill a while. You can board with me for nothin' and save all of your wages. That there money you saved I drewed to pay my hands off to-morrer. If I'd lost it I should have been obleeged to gone back to town and drewed more."

"I'm glad I was able to save your money."

"You won't lose nothin' by it, I reckon. Now what shall we do with this chap? Looks as if he was comin' to. I've got a piece of rope in the wagon. Guess we'd better tie him up and turn him over to the constable."

"That's the right thing to do. He'll be safer behind the bars."

The old man got the rope and he and the boy tied Lanky Luff so that he was quite helpless. Then they put him into the wagon which was nearly full of bundles of old carpet with tags attached, after which the factory owner with Harry Harmon seated beside him, drove on to the village.

CHAPTER II.—The Rug Manufactory.

A Western village is a whole lot different from an Eastern one. Some of them have all the characteristics of a live town, lacking only size and population. This was the case with Rushville, where Jabez Green lived and carried on his factory business. It was a thriving place, and its

main street fronted on the Moccasin River—an important stream in that part of the State. But for lack of railroad facilities Rushville would have been a hustling town.

The nearest railroad station was at Carlin, six miles away by road. This was the town where Jabez Green did his banking business. The Rushville Bank was every bit as solid an institution as the Carlin National, and every business man in the village, Mr. Green excepted, deposited his funds in it. Why the factory owner held aloof, and submitted to the weekly inconvenience, winter and summer alike, of a twelve mile round trip over the county road, rather than patronize his home bank, was a mystery to his acquaintances. Jabez Green drove straight to the office of the head constable of the village. This was in one corner of the lock-up; and that building stood close to his cottage. Constable Allen was seated in his office smoking and talking politics with a villager when Mr. Green intruded upon him and told him he had a prisoner to hand over.

"A prisoner, Mr. Green!" exclaimed the officer, in surprise.

"Yes; he's one of two rascals who held me up along the trunpike and would have robbed me of a considerable sum only for a boy who came along at the time and turned the tables on them. Come out and take charge of him."

The constable, who was a big, muscular man, as befitted his calling, accompanied the factory owner outside, and looked at the prisoner, who had come to his senses, and appeared to be in a very ugly mood over his capture. Mr. Allen laid hold of him and yanked him out of the wagon.

"So, my fine fellow, you are a highway robber, are you?" he said, sternly. "You will find we know how to deal with chaps of your calling. You've a jackknife, I suppose, Mr. Green? Just cut his legs loose so he can walk."

The factory owner did so.

"Now, come with me, Mr. Robber, and I'll give you a nice little room all to yourself, where you can ponder over the future that is in store for you."

He led him into the office first, followed by Mr. Green, and shut and locked the door.

"What's your name, my fine fellow?" he asked Luff.

"None of your business," snarled the man.

"Then you go down as John Doe. Charge—attempted highway robbery," said the constable making the entries in his book. "Description—tall, loosely put together, smooth face, cut over left eye, short brown hair, etc. Now we'll see what you have in your pockets."

The constable searched the prisoner, finding a silver quarter, a dirk knife, a revolver, and sundry other articles, all of which were duly entered in the book. Then he opened an inner door which led into the corridor of the lock-up. There were two airy cells on either side of it, and a fifth, about double the size of the others, at the far end. The cells were provided with iron cots and some bedding, an iron wash-stand and a chair clamped to the floor. Lanky Luff was locked into one of them. The constable then rejoined the factory owner in his office.

"I'll have him up before the justice in the morning. Be on hand about ten o'clock, Mr.

Green, with the boy, to press the charge," said Mr. Allen.

He unlocked the front door so the factory owner could pass out. Jabez Green drove straight to the factory which stood close to the bank of the Moccasin River, the waters of which furnished the power, by means of a big wheel provided with paddles, to drive the machinery of the establishment. Entering the yard he reined beside a door to which a "No Admittance" sign was affixed. Dismounting he motioned the boy to follow him. They walked around to the front of the building and entered by a door, above which was a sign reading: "Jabez Green, Rug Manufacturer," while on the door itself was a tin sign marked "Office."

The office was furnished with a roll top desk and chair in one corner by a window overlooking the street; a tall desk, before which a country-looking youth of sixteen years was perched on a tall stool engaged with an account book and papers, evidently the bookkeeper of the mill; a safe, which stood in another corner, a coyping-press and stand, and other things that go to make up the equipment of a small counting-room. The fore-going was separated from a small space for callers to stand by a wooden railing and a swinging gate. Mr. Green entered the enclosure and motioned Harry to follow.

"I will make you acquainted with my nephew, Samuel Parker. Sam, this is Harry Harmon. He's going to stay with us a day or two, perhaps longer if he decides to go to work here," said the mill owner.

The two boys shook hands, said they were glad to meet, and eyed each other curiously, as boys will on a first acquaintance.

"Take him around and show him the mill," said the old man, turning away and going to his desk. "And tell John to unload the wagon," he added.

"Come along," said Sam, passing through a door into an entry, where there was a flight of stairs leading to the floor above.

Harry now heard the subdued hum of machinery in motion above. Before mounting the stairs Sam opened another door off the entry, and Harry saw a large room filled with tagged bundles apparently ready for shipment.

"This is our shipping department," explained Sam. "Those bundles contain rugs ready to go back to the people who furnished the material to make 'em up. You see our business is the manufacture of new rugs out of old, and in many instances useless, pieces of carpet. Carpets are mostly out of style these days. Everybody, as a rule, uses rugs. They're handier to clean, and easily moved about. We do a large business, and it's growing. My uncle has been in it twenty-five years. We advertise extensively in certain papers and magazines that circulate largely in the rural districts all over the country. We get orders from every State in the Union. John," he said to the man in the room who was marking a case with shipping directions, "the wagon is in the yard with a load of stuff Mr. Green brought from Carlin."

"All right; I'll attend to it," replied John, with a glance at Harry Harmon.

"Come with me, Harmon, and I'll show you the first process we put the carpet through after we receive it," said Sam.

He led the way to a room beyond which was filled with bundles of old carpet just as they had been received from the railroad station. There was a machine in the room for cutting the carpet up in different sizes, and an apparatus for cleansing it both by water and live steam.

"The fragments of carpet go into the cleansing machine, looking faded and dirty, and come out looking bright and new. It is then sent upstairs where it is pulled to pieces, after which it is handed to the weaver to be woven into rugs of sizes and designs according to orders. If the material is not bright enough to make an attractive looking rug we add some suitable material to it to bring about the desired result, charging the customer so much extra for the additional stuff we have to supply. All this is explained in the circulars we send out to the persons answering our advertisement, and they know beforehand in most cases, exactly what the completed rugs will cost them," explained Sam.

"It's a great business," said Harry.

"Yes, it is quite profitable to us, and at the same time the people who send their useless carpets to us get in return handsome rugs that they couldn't duplicate at a store for double the money."

"So they make money, too."

"Sure they do. We've turned thousands and thousands of yards of carpet, of no earthly use to any one, into handsome, serviceable rugs that are beautifying the homes of our well pleased customers. Now come upstairs, and you'll see how the carpet is taken apart and how it is being made into rugs."

They returned to the entry and mounted the stairs. A dull, whirling, clashing sound, that rose and fell monotonous as the ticking of a clock, smote on Harry's ears, and grew louder the nearer he and his conductor drew to its source. Sam opened the first door off the landing and entered a big work-room, followed by Harry. The scene was a new and novel one for the homeless boy. From the ceiling depended hangers with small shafts and cone pulleys, with belting running horizontally to countershafts, and vertically to pulleys connected with the different machines, every one of which was running at its capacity.

Wheels were whirling, bobbins were working back and forth with mechanical precision, pulleys were humming, and metallic vibrations rose as steel parts came together at regular intervals. There were perhaps a dozen boys and girls at work in the room, and several men. The foreman was walking around inspecting and overseeing the work. Harry had a good opportunity to see all that was going on and the occupants of the place regarded him with not a little curiosity and speculation. His appearance showed that he did not belong to the prosperous class, and while the workers wondered that he should be shown around the room, like any visitor, the impression prevailed that he was looking for a job. After Sam had explained the various details, he took him to other parts of the building where matters connected with the business were under way. Finally they returned to the office.

"I think it is a very interesting business," replied Harry, with a smile.

"How would you like to stay here a while and work for me? I want a smart boy like you about

the place, who has the genius to take hold of anything he is put to and give satisfaction."

"You seem to have a good opinion of my abilities, Mr. Green."

"I can tell what's in a boy by lookin' at him. I have had some evidence of what you are capable of doin' in an emergency, and ag'in obstacles that would intimidate most boys. To tell you the truth I've taken a fancy to you, and I'd like to have you in the factory. I'll give you fair wages and a chance to rise. You've saved me a lot of money and I'd like to return the favor. Suppose you try it for a couple of weeks, or a month, then if you're not satisfied to remain I won't say nothin' ag'in you goin' on to Chicago. You can board at my house, and Sam will show you around and make you acquainted with the young folks of the village. What do you say?"

"I'd like to think it over. I'll give you my answer in the morning."

"All right. We'll go over to the house now, for the works will shut down in a few minutes."

He took Harry over to his cottage about two hundred yards away, and introduced him to his sister, Sam's mother, who kept house for him. She was a pleasant woman, of middle age, whose husband was dead many years. She also had a daughter, Hattie—a pretty, winsome girl, who helped her mother around the house. When she came in from the kitchen her mother introduced Harry to her. Our hero, aware of the deficiencies in his apparel, felt a bit embarrassed in her company, but she soon put him at his ease by treating him as nicely as though he were the best dressed lad in the neighborhood.

Mr. Green told how Harry had saved him from being robbed and done up by the two highway robbers, and that raised him a whole lot in the estimation of Mrs. Parker and her daughter. Hattie saw that he was good looking and manly, and now that he had shown himself to be a courageous boy as well, she became quite interested in him. By the time supper was ready, Sam came in, and then everybody sat up to the table, and Harry partook of the best meal he had enjoyed for some time.

CHAPTER III.—Hal Goes to Work in the Rug Factory.

After supper Sam took Harry upstairs to the large room which he occupied. It had two beds in it, one of which the visitor was to use while he remained at the cottage.

"Well, do you think you'll stay here and go to work for my uncle?" asked Sam.

"I think I will," replied Harry, whose decision was largely influenced by Hattie's bright eyes and her brother's friendly attitude toward him.

"Glad to hear it," replied Sam, in a hearty tone. "I rather like you, and it will be a pleasure to have you room with me. We'll have a bang-up time together outside the factory. There are a lot of good fellows in the village, and a crowd of pretty girls. In fact there are a lot more girls than fellows, and a new chap, especially if he's as good looking and well bred as you are, is bound to attract notice, and be sought after."

Harry thought that Hattie would fill the bill as far as he was concerned, but he feared she might

be particularly interested in one of her brother's friends, which would, of course, put his nose out of joint. He felt at that moment that the length of his stay in that locality would depend to some extent on the place he secured in the girl's estimation.

"Girls don't worry me much," he said, with a laugh, "though I'm bound to say that I think your sister is the nicest one I ever met."

"She's all right," said Sam. "Best little girl in the world, if I do say it, seeing that I'm her brother. You'll like her, and I'll gamble on it that she'll like you, for you're just her style."

"Not much style about me at present," smiled Harry.

"Oh, well, clothes aren't everything," replied Sam, consolingly. "You can get a new suit in the village for a few dollars."

"I'll have to earn the few dollars first. The sum total of my finances amounts to something less than six dollars. I'm a poor boy, you see, without any other prospects than those your uncle has offered me, which is very kind of him."

"Not at all. You saved him several hundred dollars. He couldn't do less than show his gratitude in some way. I dare say if you refused to stay here he'd hand you \$50 or \$100 to help you on your way to Chicago."

"I don't think I'd take any money from him for what I did, at least not so much as you have mentioned. I didn't do more than my duty in helping him."

"I think you did a whole lot, and he thinks so, too. It was no silly thing for you to tackle two tough rascals all by yourself. You've got real pluck, and that is what I admire in a chap. Sis thinks you are as brave as they come."

"Oh, well, we won't talk about that," said Harry, pleased to hear that Sam's sister had expressed her appreciation of his courage. "I'm glad to have been of service to your uncle, and as long as I work for him he won't have any cause to find fault with the way I attend to business."

"I'll bet he won't. You look as if you were able and willing to hustle. Take my word for it you'll make no mistake in accepting his proposition. I know Uncle Jabez. He's taken a shine to you, or he wouldn't be so anxious to have you remain here. Then he's going to have you stay here at the house, and that means considerable, too. He intends to push you ahead in the business. You'll stand a first-class chance of becoming the foreman one of these days. And it isn't out of the question but he might leave you a small interest in the business when he hopped the twig, and then you and me would run the factory together."

"You're looking a long way ahead, Sam," laughed Harry.

"Perhaps I am, but it just struck me that things might pan out that way," answered Sam. "At any rate I don't think you're going to lose anything by hitching on here. A certainty is better than the other thing. You don't know what you'd be up against in Chicago. It's a big town where everybody is looking after number one. Seems to me you'd be like a strange hen in a big barnyard. It would take more than a locomotive to drag me away from here to a large city. I'd feel lost there. No, sir. I'm satisfied to remain right here in Rushville and take things as they come."

The boys talked together for some time and

then went downstairs, where they found Mr. Green reading the Carlin daily paper he had brought home with him. Mrs. Parker and Hattie had finished their work in the kitchen and were preparing to do some sewing. Harry spent a pleasant evening with his new friends, and at half-past nine went upstairs with Sam and turned in. Breakfast was ready at half-past seven, and during the meal Harry told Mr. Green that he had decided to accept his offer. The factory owner seemed pleased, and Hattie also was secretly delighted. At eight o'clock Mr. Green, Sam and Harry went to the factory.

"You may as well start in helping John in the shipping department," said the factory owner. "He's got more than he can attend to just now. Take him in and introduce him to John, Sam."

"Come along, Hal," said Sam.

They passed into the entry and thence into the shipping room.

"John, this is Harry Harmon. He's going to work here. He's to begin by giving you a lift," said Sam.

"Glad to know you, Harmon. Hang your coat on that nail yonder and I'll give you something to do."

John's other name was Davis, and Harry found him a pleasant sort of a man. He showed the boy how to sew burlap covering over the bundles of completed rugs ready to be shipped off to customers, and how to attach the tags containing the name and railroad station of the person the bundle was to go to. Harry didn't have to be told twice how to do anything he was set at, so he and John get along famously together. He was hard at work when Mr. Green entered the room at half-past nine.

"Put on your hat and coat, Harmon," said the old man. "We've got to go to the office of the justice to appear against that tall highway robber."

"All right, sir," said Hal.

It was seldom that a prisoner of any importance was brought up before the justice, as Rushville was not much troubled with real criminals. The cases that the justice was usually called to pass upon were drunkenness, disorderly conduct and juvenile delinquency. The sentences he imposed were, aside from fines, one to thirty days in the lock-up. The presence of a highway robber in the lock-up, the news of which circulated throughout the place the evening before, created considerable excitement, and there was a big crowd at the office of the justice that morning.

Half of the people on hand could not get into the room, and so they blocked up the sidewalk outside and endeavored to learn the facts as best they could. It was known in a general way that old man Green had been held up on the highway on his return from his weekly visit to Carlin, by two men, one of whom had made his escape. It was also understood that the factory owner had been saved by the intervention of a boy, a stranger in that locality. As Mr. Green had furnished no details to the constable that official had been unable to give out any more points, consequently the assembled villagers were on the qui vive to learn just what had happened. When the factory owner and Harry appeared they were immediately surrounded, and the old man was besieged for information. He declined to satisfy the curiosity

of his questioners, on the ground that he was in a hurry to go before the justice and get through with the business. He and Hal found it impossible to get into the office through the front door, so they had to go around to the rear entrance, where they found one of the deputies on guard.

On gaining admittance that way they were shown to seats reserved for them in the railed-off section. There were no seats for spectators, so the onlookers were jammed between the railing and the wall facing on the street, like sardines in a box. When the prisoner was brought in he pleaded not guilty, and then Mr. Green was called to the witness chair. He stated the facts as far as he knew them, and gave way to Harry, the star witness. The boy began by stating that he was resting under the shade of the hedge, after tramping from Carlin, when the two rascals came up and stopped under the oak tree.

He repeated the substance of their conversation, by which he learned of their intention to hold up a man who was coming that way in a wagon with a well-lined wallet. He decided to frustrate their scheme if he could. He then described the hold-up and how he had succeeded in saving Mr. Green. While he was giving his testimony, Lanky Luff eyed him with a vengeful look. It was plain to the rascal that Harry was the cause of his capture and the failure of the job. He mentally determined to get even with the boy if he ever got the chance. When Hal told how Sam Snare had run away, leaving his companion to his fate, Luff cursed his associate's cowardice under his breath. Had the case been reversed he would have stood by Sam, and it made him mad to think that Snare had deserted him to save his own skin. When the justice asked him if he had anything to say on his own behalf, he remained silent, so the magistrate remanded him to the county jail at Carlin to stand trial in due course for his crime. That ended the proceedings, and Mr. Green and Hal returned to the factory.

CHAPTER IV.—A Hot Time on the Road.

The noon hour at the factory was announced by a whistle on the small steam boiler that operated the cleaning machine, and all hands quit for an hour. By that time it was known to all the boys and girls in the principal workroom that the young visitor of the day before was working in the shipping department. Most of the girls were sorry that he had not been assigned to their room so they could get acquainted with him, for his good looks and gentlemanly behavior had been commented on, and the operatives wondered who he was and where he had come from. His poor attire showed that he was in hard luck, but none of the girls turned their noses up at him for that reason. They were not in affluent circumstances themselves. Those who went home to their dinner tried to get a peep into the shipping room on their way out, but without success.

It would have done them no good if they had, for Hal and Sam had already gone to the cottage for their dinner. The boy who worked around the yard, and assisted in the cleaning room, drove to Carlin nearly every day, Friday excepted,

when Mr. Green went himself, with a wagon load of bundles and boxes, which he delivered at the station for transmission either by freight or express, usually the former. Mr. Green decided to turn that job over to Hal. As the boy was going to take a load right after dinner, Hal received orders to go with him and learn the ropes. Accordingly Hal and the boy, whose name was Larry Sullivan, started in the light wagon, drawn by the sorrel horse, for Carlin.

"So your name is Harry Harmon?" said Larry, "and yez aee goin' to take this job off me hands?"

"Yes," replied Hal.

"Where did yez come from, and are yez a relation of the boss?"

"I came from the city of Quincy. I'm not related in any way to Mr. Green."

"Well, yez seem to have struck it fat here, for you're stoppin' at the ould man's house. Were yez sint here by some frind of his?"

"No."

"Thin how is it he's taken yez to boord at his house?"

"I couldn't tell you. It was his own proposal."

"He niver did that with any wan else."

"I dare say he did it because I saved him from being robbed yesterday."

"Robbed, is it!" exclaimed Larry, opening his eyes. "How is that?"

"Haven't you heard about it?"

"Faith, I haven't."

"Then I'll tell you," said Hal, who proceeded to put his companion in possession of all the facts connected with the hold-up.

"Be gorry, that explains it. It's no want of pluck ye have to tackle thim two highwaymen widout even a gun to defend yourself. Sure, I'd think twice meself before I'd done it. It's desperate chances yez took, so ye did. Are yez used to that kind of business?"

"No. I was never up against such a thing before."

"Well, yez are made of the right stuff. Yez can take my word for it that the ould man won't forget it. He's a mighty odd ould chap, as yez'll find out if ye stay here, but he's all right just the same. Now that ye've started well wid him, if yez play your cards right it'll be money in your pocket. Where were yez goin' when that thing happened?"

"To Chicago."

"To Chicago, is it? And on fut?" cried Larry in astonishment.

"Yes."

"And yez expicted to walk all the way there?"

"I did."

"Didn't yez have any money to ride?"

"Nothing to speak of."

"And did yez walk from Quincy here?"

"Every foot of the way."

"Upon me word ye're a wonder, so ye are."

"Oh, no; there's nothing wonderful about me, Larry. Anybody can walk along the public highway, for any distance, if his shoes hold out and he can pick up enough to eat along the route. Tramps do that from one year's end to the other."

"Well, it's a fine chap yez are, anyway, and it's glad I am to know ye," said Larry, flicking the sorrel horse with his whip.

In due time they reached the railroad station and Larry sought out the agent. All but one

of the bundles were to go by freight, and the agent made out the waybills in duplicate. Larry received one set and then he carried the small bundle to the express office. There were two bundles of old carpet to be carried back, and these were soon loaded on the wagon. Then they started on their return journey.

"Say, young fellers, will yer give me a ride?"

Hal and Larry looked around and saw a hard-looking man standing in the road. They didn't fancy his appearance much. Still Larry thought it rather mean to refuse his request.

"Jump up behind, if you want to," he said, reining in.

The man accepted the invitation without taking the trouble to thank him. Larry snapped his whip and they rattled on again.

"Sure I don't like the looks of that chap at all, at all," the Irish boy said to his companion in a low tone.

"Nor I," replied Hal. "There isn't much to choose between him and the men who tried to rob Mr. Green yesterday."

"Maybe he's a friend of their?"

"I hardly think so, but I wouldn't be surprised if he's a bird of the same feather."

"It's no harm givin' him a lift. He can't do us any hurt, and he wouldn't be after tryin' to stale thim bundles of ould carpet."

"I suppose not, but I'd rather have his room than his company."

The boys watched the man occasionally as they road along, but he gave them no trouble, sitting with his back against one of the bundles and his legs hanging down over the tail board. They were half way to Rushville when a wagon hove in sight coming toward them. It contained Constable Allen, with his prisoner, Lanky Luff, handcuffed, and a deputy driving. They were on their way to the county jail. Hal recognized Luff and the constable.

"There's one of the men who attacked Mr. Green yesterday," he said to Larry. "He was up before the justice this morning and Mr. Green and I appeared against him. They're taking him to Carlin for trial."

Their passenger, hearing the oncoming wagon, turned around and looked at it. He uttered an exclamation of surprise, and an imprecation rose to his lips. His hand sought his hip pocket and he pulled out a revolver. Crouching behind the bundles of carpet he took deliberate aim at the head constable as the wagons were passing and fired. Constable Allen threw up one arm and fell back in the wagon dragging his prisoner with him. Hal and Larry turned around in consternation at the report. They saw their direputable passenger spring down into the road, level a revolver at the deputy, and call upon him to stop. The deputy was in the act of drawing his own pistol when he was covered.

"For the love of hiven what does this mane?" cried Larry.

"Stop. That rascal is trying to rescue the prisoner," said Hal.

"Sure if we stop we may peppered oursilves," and Larry struck the horse with the whip to make him go faster.

"Stop, I tell you," cried Hal, firmly, reaching for the reins. "Are you going to run away like a coward and let that rascal overpower the driver

and save the scoundrel in the wagon from going to jail?"

"Sure, what can we do widout a toothpick to defend oursilves wid? Are yez such a fool as to run ag'in a six-shooter in the hands of a disprit man? Begorry, I'd sooner be a coward for five minutes than a corpse for the rest of me life."

"Go on if you want to," replied Hal, in an impatient tone. "I shall stay and do what I can."

He sprang out of the wagon as he spoke.

"Oh, murder!" ejaculated Larry, reining in. "What a b'y for lookin' for trouble. Sure, I can't run away and lave him to be kilt. That chap has the driver now. Why did we iver take him up?"

Luff, in the meanwhile, was taking advantage of the situation to free himself. He was searching the pockets of the wounded and unconscious constable for the key to unlock the handcuff. He had recognized the man who had come to his rescue as an old pal who could be depended upon, and his heart beat with satisfaction at the unexpected change in his prospects. The deputy constable, when he found himself looking into the muzzle of a six-shooter in the hand of a ruffian who had already shown his readiness to shoot, felt that it would be as much as his life was worth to offer any resistance, so he pulled in the horse and threw up his hands on receiving an order to do so. This was the state of affairs when Hal started forward. Without a weapon he had small chance of helping the deputy out. Apparently he was rushing into the lion's jaws himself. But he was pluck clear to the backbone. He would have despised himself had he deserted the officers of the law in their emergency. Picking up a large stone out of the road he let it fly at the head of the rascal who was in the act of mounting the front hub in order to disarm the deputy. His aim was true and the stone caught the fellow. With a cry he fell, dropping his weapon. Here was the boy's chance. He dashed forward and picked up the gun just as Lanky Luff got free. The situation would have been completely reversed had the deputy left Hal to handle his man and turned his attention to the prisoner. Instead of doing that he drew his gun and covered the fallen scoundrel in the road, at the same time dropping the reins and springing down to secure him. Luff was quick to see how things were going. He crouched down in the wagon while he searched for the constable's revolver. Securing it he reached over and fired at the deputy point blank. The man rolled over, badly wounded. Luff then turned his weapon on Hal. The boy saw his danger, jumped aside and then fired at Luff. Both bullets missed their mark. The other rascal staggered to his feet with his head all bloody from the wound inflicted by the stone.

"Climb in, Bowers," shouted Luff, "and whip up the nag."

As he spoke a bullet from Hal's revolver whizzed past his chest. With an imprecation he turned and shot at the boy, who had been backing off. Fortunately he had not stopped to take much aim and the ball went wild.

Then he reached down and helped Bowers up on the seat. A moment later they drove off at a hot pace.

CHAPTER V.—Hal Accumulates a Reputation.

Hal sent a bullet after them, but without any other result than to cause Luff to shake his fist at him. Then it was that Hal became aware that Larry, while he had taken no active part in the skirmish, had not actually deserted him.

"Come here, Larry, and help me with this man. He seems to be badly wounded," he said.

While the Irish boy was turning his horse Hal noticed that the scoundrels had stopped about two hundred yards away.

"They're going to shake the wagon," he thought.

Such, however, was not their intention. Hal soon saw what they were up to. They got off the seat, and raising the insensible Constable Allen by the head and feet threw him, with brutal indifference, into the road. Then they whipped up again, and disappeared around a bend in the road in a cloud of dust.

"What scoundrels those men are!" muttered Hal, as Larry drove up. "Did you see what those chaps did, Larry?"

"Sure I did. They tossed Mr. Allen into the road to get rid of him."

"We'll go after him as soon as we get this man into the wagon," said Hal.

Shoving the bundles of carpet well forward Hal and Larry lifted the wounded deputy into the vehicle. Then they drove to the spot where Constable Allen lay in a heap and got him into the wagon, too.

"This is mighty bad business," said Hal, when they were headed for Rushville once more.

"Faith it is. It couldn't be much worse," replied Larry.

"That chap we gave the lift to must have been a pal of the highwayman's after all. Looks as if he was on his way to Rushville to try and rescue his associate."

"Yis."

"If you'd backed me up we might have prevented the prisoner from escaping and nailed the other rascal. I knocked him out for a few minutes and could have mastered him alone. The deputy made a mistake in taking his eyes off his prisoner and jumping out of the wagon."

Larry made no reply. He felt ashamed for having hung back when his services at the critical moment might have made a lot of difference in the result of the affair. They rode on in silence for a while.

"I'm afeard it's disgraced I'll be whin yez tell about this scrape," said the Irish boy at length.

"Don't worry, Larry. I won't lay any blame on you," replied Hal.

"You'll have to say that I looked on while yez did the wurruk."

"No, I won't say that you hung back. I'll make out that you were in it as much as me, only you had the horse and wagon on your hands, and that took up some of your attention."

"It's ashamed I am, but begorry I don't like to face a six-shooter."

"I don't blame you."

"But you didn't seem to care yourself. Sure, if I had your nerve I might have done somethin'. You'd make a fine sojer, so you would."

"Do you know where we can find a doctor?" asked Hal, as they drew near the village.

"Yis. There's wan about a quarter of a mile ahead. He lives in a white house wid green blinds that stands back from the road."

"We'll stop there, and if he's in we'll turn the constable and his deputy over to him," said Hal.

They reached the doctor's house in a few minutes and Hal jumped out of the wagon. Running up the graveled walk he rang the door bell.

"Is Dr. Fox in?" he asked the servant who answered the ring.

"Yes."

"I'd like to see him."

He was ushered into the physician's study and stated how things were.

"Bring them in here," said the doctor. "Do you want any help?"

"No. Larry Sullivan and I can manage it between us."

He returned to the wagon.

"Come, Larry, help me get the wounded men into the doctor's house," he said.

They carried Constable Allen and his deputy in turn into the doctor's surgery. The former they placed on the operating table, and the latter on a leather lounge.

"If we can be of any assistance to you, doctor, command us," said Hal.

"I shall want you to wait anyway till I find out how badly hurt these men are. It may be necessary to send them to the hospital in Carlin at once, in which case you'll have to take word to one of the Councilmen," said the doctor.

He first examined the deputy, whose face was bloody, and found that he had been merely stunned by the bullet, which had cut a nasty furrow along the side of his head. He was beginning to show signs of coming to his senses. Not considering the wound dangerous Doctor Fox turned his attention to Constable Allen. His wound was very serious, as the ball had passed through his side. A probe located the bullet imbedded in the muscles of his back. No vital spot had been injured, and the doctor said he would soon get well with proper care. He fixed both patients up. By the time he had completed bandaging the deputy's head, the patient was able to sit up. While Doctor Fox was busy Hal told him how the officers had received their wounds.

"Too bad," he remarked. "Those fellows must be desperate chaps."

"Sure yez may well say that, sor," put in Larry. "They'd as soon shoot as ate. It's a wonder me frind here ain't a subject for the coroner, for he exchanged several shots wid one of thim."

"Is it possible?" said the doctor, looking at Hal; "and you didn't receive a wound."

"I'm thankful to say I did not, nor did I hit the rascal either, which doesn't speak very well for my marksmanship," replied Hal, with a smile.

"He's a brave lad," said the deputy. "He came to my assistance when I was held up at the point of a revolver and downed the rascal with a stone. Only that the prisoner got free, and got hold of Mr. Allen's weapon, we'd have had both of the scoundrels safe, and I wouldn't have got hurt."

Doctor Fox now succeeded in reviving the head constable. Allen was astonished to find himself lying on the operating table in the doctor's surgery, for he had no idea of anything that had hap-

pened after Bowers fired his shot from the wagon. The doctor advised that he be taken to his home at once, promising to call during the evening to see how he was getting on. Allen wanted to know what had occurred, and where the prisoner was. Doctor Fox suggested that the story be deferred until later.

"But I want to know how I was shot," insisted the constable. "And what's the matter with your head, Sadler?" he added, looking at his deputy.

"I was shot, too, only not by the same man," replied Sadler.

"The dickens you were. Let me hear all about it."

"No," interposed the doctor, "you must keep quiet or I won't be answerable for the consequences. Your wound is a serious one, though not necessarily dangerous. That, however, depends on yourself. You must do as I advise if you want to get on your feet soon."

Constable Allen, conscious that he was pretty weak, yielded reluctantly. The boys, with some help from the deputy, carried the constable to the wagon. They drove straight to his house, carried him upstairs to his bedroom, and left Sadler to look after him. Then they went on to the factory. Hal thought it was his duty to see Mr. Green at once and report what had happened on the road. He found the rug manufacturer at his desk and told his story. Mr. Green was much astonished to learn the facts.

"So that rascal got away," he said.

"He did with the help of his pal," replied Hal.

"I don't see how they got the best of the two constables."

"The fellow we gave a lift to surprised them, as I have told you. By shooting Mr. Allen he had only the deputy to tackle, and by quick action got the best of him until I chipped in. Mr. Sadler made the mistake of leaving the wagon and thus giving the prisoner the chance to get free and use Mr. Allen's revolver."

Hal then told how he had exchanged shots with the highwayman.

"I did the best I could, sir, to prevent those rascals getting away, but it didn't amount to anything in the end. They drove off in the constable's wagon, and it would be hard to say where they are now," said the boy.

The news of the affair soon got around the village, and it gave rise to considerable excitement. The Carlin police were notified about the matter, and requested to make a hunt for the wagon and the two rascals. On the way to supper Hal told all the facts to Sam, and he declared that he wouldn't have taken the chances Hal did for a gold mine. Hattie and her mother heard Hal's story at the supper table, and the girl turned pale at the risk their new friend had been face to face with. Sadler, the deputy constable, gave Hal full credit for the part he had played in the affair, and as a consequence the newcomer to Rushville became an object of interest and curiosity to the inhabitants of the place. The girls especially were eager to see him and make his acquaintance. The factory operatives who went home to their dinner that noon learned for the first time how the new employee had saved Mr. Green from being robbed of the money he had brought from Carlin to pay them off, and they no longer wondered at the rug manufacturer hav-

ing taken the boy to board at his house. By next morning, which was Sunday, they had all heard about Hal's second adventure with the highwayman and his pal, and in the eyes of the girls at least, he became quite a hero.

CHAPTER VI.—A Warm Reception.

The Carlin police made a strenuous effort to catch Luff and his pal, but failed to find any trace of them, though the horse and wagon were found near the station, which was taken as an indication that the rascals had left the town by rail. None of the railroad employees had seen them board the cars, so it was impossible for the police to find out whether they had gone east or west. A couple of weeks passed. Hal was getting on famously at the factory, and Mr. Green was very much pleased with the boy's energy and industry. Four or five afternoons a week Hal carried a load of bundles to the railroad station for shipment, and brought back any consignments of old carpet he found there. At the end of the second week John Davis found he could get along without further help from Hal, so Mr. Green sent the boy up to the main workroom to learn the rug manufacturing business. This change put Larry Sullivan back on his old job of driving to the railroad station, which suited him immensely. Hal made rapid progress in the rug making department, and was the most popular workman on the floor. About the middle of the summer business became unusually brisk and the hands had to work two and sometimes three night a week. The foreman had made Hal his general assistant a short time before and now he put him in charge of the floor when the force worked nights. It was considerable of a responsibility for the boy to assume, for he was yet comparatively raw at the business, but he proved able to handle things to the foreman's satisfaction, while the girls rather liked to be bossed by him. When the factory was operated at night, work shut down at ten o'clock. Hal, however, was not able to get away before half-past ten, and sometimes eleven o'clock struck before he reached the cottage. One evening Hal had a large rush order to finish up that night. When ten o'clock came it was not finished yet so he asked the hands to keep on till it was done.

The work of the girls was completed half an hour later and they went home. Harry, Larry Sullivan and a couple of the men remained to see the job through. The men were allowed to go at eleven and Hal and Larry proceeded to pack the order for shipment by the morning freight. It was a warm night and they had the windows of the shipping room, which faced the river, open. Larry was sewing up a bundle in one part of the room, and Hal happened to look toward the windows and he saw, as distinctly as he ever saw anything in his life, two hard-looking faces peering into the room. Not only that, but he recognized the faces as those of Lanky Luff and his pal, Bowers. He was so surprised that he paused in his work and stared at them. They turned away while he was looking without giving any indication that they had noticed his gaze.

Hal sprang to his feet, rushed into the entry, and made his way out of the building. Although

he lost little time in doing this the rascals were not in sight. He walked all around the building, but did not see any of them. The night watchman was eating his lunch in the cleaning room at the time. Hal went in there and told him about the men.

"I suspect they are up to some mischief, so I want you to keep a particularly sharp lookout when Larry and I quit. This is Friday night, remember, and Mr. Green has the money to pay off with to-morrow in the office safe. These chaps may know about it so it's up to you to see that they don't get into the office and do things," said Hal. "I have had experience with those fellows before, and I warn you that they're dangerous. I have no doubt that they are armed, so look out, for they will shoot without much hesitation if they can't accomplish their purpose otherwise. Keep your gun in your hand ready for business, and give them a warm reception if they try to enter the building. Constable Allen would like nothing better than to get his hands on them, for one of them is the chap who shot him, while the other is the prisoner that escaped from him at the time of the shooting."

The watchman, an old chap, promised to keep a bright lookout. When Hal returned to the shipping room he told Larry about the two rascals.

"Are yez sure they were the same chaps?" asked the Irish boy.

"Positive. I saw their faces distinctly."

"What a nerve they have to come back to this place when they know they're wanted by the police."

"I guess this isn't the only place where the police want them. As to their nerve, it's what helps to keep them out of jail."

"Do yez think they mane to break into the buildin' tonight?"

"I dare say they are thinking about doing so. I have warned the watchman about them, and told him to be on the alert."

"He's an ould chap. What could he do ag'in the pair of thim villains?"

"Not much if they surprised him; but now that he knows they're around he ought to be able to make things lively for them if they try to break in."

"I hope he will," replied Larry, but his tone seemed to indicate that he had his doubts about the watchman's ability to hold off such desperate rascals. They finished their work about midnight and then left the watchman in charge of the premises. As Hal had only a short distance to go he was soon in his room. Sam had gone to bed two hours before and was sleeping like a top. Although Hal had had an extra hard day's work he did not feel particularly sleepy. The fact of the matter was that the knowledge he had of the presence of Luff and Bowers in that vicinity made him a bit anxious about the safety of the factory.

The scoundrels might set the place on fire to get square with old man Green for helping to capture the former and then prosecute him. Or they might be aware that Green had the money to pay off his hands next day in the office safe, and they had designs upon it. The night watchman was a rugged old fellow, who never went to sleep on his job, but still he wasn't a match for either of the ruffians, let alone the two. They

might make a simultaneous attempt to get into the factory from two points, and the watchman couldn't guard both places at once. The more he thought about the matter the more nervous Hal became, and the less inclined he was to go to bed and leave things in the state they were. He could see the factory from the window, and he stood looking at it while he figured out whether or not he had better go over and help the watchman out.

It was not a bright night, the moon showing only occasionally through the clouds that obscured the sky. That circumstance greatly favored the two rascals, who could approach the mill without being seen. Finally Hal decided that he could not seep if he went to bed, so he put on his hat and jacket again and left the house.

He took the precaution to carry with him the revolver he had secured from Bowers the day he knocked him off the constable's wagon with a stone, and thus armed he felt able to face either or both rascals if they crossed his path. As he shut the gate he saw the flash of a light in the office. He judged that the watchman was going his rounds, and that the light he saw came from his lantern. He went straight to one of the windows that commanded a view of the interior of the office, but the watchman was not there now, and the room was quite dark. Green did not even burn a lamp in the office at night to illumine the place as many of the village storekeepers did. It would have been a good policy, but it wasn't the old man's way, and he had got along without it ever since he put up the factory some twenty-five years since.

During all that time no attempt had been made to rob the office, and so the rug manufacturer did not expect that such a thing would ever happen.

At any rate he never kept much money in the safe except on Friday nights. He needn't have kept his pay money in it then if he chose to go to Carlin on Saturday morning, instead of Friday afternoon, and draw it from the bank. The old man, however, had got into the habit of getting the money on Friday, and habit with him was second nature.

Finding that the office was dark and silent, Hal started for the employees' entrance on the side of the house. Here he knocked for admittance, but the watchman happened to be upstairs at the time and didn't hear him. Hal walked around to the back of the building and looked through one of the shipping room windows. It was as dark and silent as he and Larry had left it. He continued on to the window of the cleaning room, but there was no sign of the watchman there. He walked clear around to the road again, and was satisfied that there was no one close to the building. Judging that the watchman might be upstairs he retired to the spot where the big water wheel stood, locked so that it could not revolve. He seated himself on one of the upper paddles and kept his eyes on the mill. Presently he saw a dim flash of light on the third floor. The flash was repeated in another spot a moment later.

"That's the watchman," he soliloquized.

He was right. The old fellow was looking around to see that everything was all right on that floor. Nobody had been working up there that evening, but it was part of his duty to go

over the place, not because he expected to find anybody hiding, but to make sure that there was no danger of fire through spontaneous combustion. While Hal was looking at the upper windows he felt a sudden jar on the big water wheel. This might have been caused by the water, or, what was more likely, a piece of driftwood coming into contact with one of the lower paddles. The jarring, however, continued and then Hal heard the sound of a man's foot, as he stepped from one paddle to another higher up.

Presently a rough voice said:

"Mind yourself, Bowers. Some of these planks are blamed slippery. Tell Sam to tie the boat well, for the current pulls like a team of horses."

"My gracious!" exclaimed Hal. "There's three of the rascals, and they're climbing up the wheel. How shall I head them off? I might get away with one of them, but three are pretty big odds."

"Tell Sam to pass up the bag of tools," said Lanky Luff at that moment.

Hal stepped off the paddle and crouched down where he could not be seen. The mention made of the bag of tools convinced the boy that they intended to operate on the safe after they had secured admission to the factory.

"This is a good chance to take them by surprise, but I hate to run the chances of killing one of them, bad as they are," soliloquized Hal. "It is a serious thing to send a human being out of this world. You're likely to think of it as long as you live. I don't believe in doing it except in actual self-defense. If I could disable them it would answer every purpose, but how is a fellow to take aim in the dark?"

Just then Hal saw a dark object rise between him and the dull background of sky. This was Luff, who was in the lead. He swung a dark object on to the bank, doubtless the bag of tools. Hal decided to take the chances and shoot. Aiming low, with the intention of wounding the ruffian in the leg, he pulled the trigger. A bright flash illuminated the wheel and showed Luff in the act of stepping off on to the bank. Simultaneous with the sharp, whip-like crack of the revolver, the rascal uttered a loud cry, lost his balance and fell backward. He crashed down on his companion Bowers, knocking him off the wheel, and both fell with one tremendous splash into the river.

CHAPTER VII.—Lanky Luff in a Bad Fix.

Hal rushed to the curve of the wheel and looked down into the dark river. He couldn't see a thing—not even the figure of Sam Snare, whom the rascals had missed hitting in their rapid descent. He could hear his voice, though, quite plain. He was apparently in a great funk over the unexpected discomfiture of his two associates, and made haste to get into the boat, fearful of something happening to him. The men who had fallen into the water had been carried down under the wheel by the strong flow of the river, and came to the surface on the other side of it. The bank was anywhere from seven to twelve feet high in this neighborhood and ran flush with the water, but a little way below there was an indentation into which the water eddied, and sometimes

carried objects and dumped them on a low stone shelf. When the rascals rose to the surface they were close together, and Luff grabbed hold of Bowers, for his left leg had been hit by Hal's bullet, and he felt he was in danger of drowning unless supported in the water.

"Confound the luck!" sputtered Luff, "I'm shot in the leg. Hold me up, Bowers."

"Who in thunder shot you?" asked his companion, who was a good swimmer, as he held Luff up.

"How do I know? I didn't see who done it."

"Somebody must have been on to us."

Luff made no reply, for he could hardly keep his head above the water. At that moment the current carried them into the indentation and landed them on the shelf.

Luff grabbed the earth and rock and held on until he felt sure there was no danger of him being swept away by the water.

"We're safe on the bank somewhere," said Bowers.

He stood up, but found that the bluff was on all sides of their haven of refuge, and that they couldn't leave the spot except by water.

"We're stuck in here," he said.

"Stuck!" ejaculated Luff. "What do you mean?"

"I mean we've landed in a hole of the bank, and I can't reach to the top of it."

"What are we goin' to do, then? My leg hurts like blazes. I wish I knew who the chap was who plugged me and I'd mark him for revenge."

"Might have been the old watchman of the factory. He's the only one around here at this hour," said Bowers.

"Cuss him, whoever he is!" snarled Luff. "This wound will lay me up for a while. It's spoiled our night's work."

"Yes, and I s'pose the bag of tools is at the bottom of the river."

"No, they ain't. The shot hit me just as I chucked the bag on the top of the bank," said Luff.

"The tools are as good as lost to us, anyhow, for the fellow who shot you will take them."

"This is blamed hard luck," groaned Luff.

"That's what it is," admitted Bowers.

"We can't stay here all night. We'd be nailed in the mornin'. Sam ought to have followed us in the boat to pick us up."

"We went clean under the wheel before you could say Jack Robinson. We were swept in here before he could get the boat loose. I think I hear his oars now."

"Then yell out to him."

"Hullo, Sam!" shouted Bowers.

"Hullo yourself!" came back the reply. "Where are yer?"

"In a hole in the bank. Pull in."

Sam Snare noted the direction of Bowers' voice and pulled in to the shore. At that moment the moon sailed out into a patch of clear sky and illuminated the river and shore.

"Here we are, Sam," cried Bowers.

Sam saw his two companions on the rocky shelf and pulled in. He had some difficulty in making the place owing to the rush of the current.

"Catch hold of the line, Bill," he said to Bowers, "and pull in."

"Let her go."

Swish came the line through the air. Bowers caught it and pulled the boat partly into the indentation.

"Help Lanky aboard, Sam. He's in a bad way. Shot in the leg," he said.

"Who shot him?" asked Sam.

"He couldn't see in the dark."

"You two tumbled right by me like a shot," said Sam. "If I'd been in yer way I'd have been knocked head over heels into the water myself."

"Lucky for you that you wasn't in the way."

"And for you two, for if I'd gone in I wouldn't be here with the boat to take yer off. Give me yer arm, Lanky, and I'll lift yer in."

As Luff tried to stand up with Bowers' help he swore like a trooper, for his leg hurt him like sixty, and that was the way he was accustomed to relieve his feelings. The two men got him into the boat out into the stream, and Sam, picking up the oars, rowed down the river.

"What are we goin' to do about Lanky's leg?" asked Sam. "If we take him to a doctor we're liable to be pinched. If we don't take him to one he may lose his leg."

Sam's remark brought another volley of imprecations from Luff.

"I'll have to see a doctor," he groaned. "The balls is in it and it's got to come out. I can't take no chances of havin' my leg cut off by one of them sawbones. I'd be pinched anyway."

"We'll have to take you, then," said Bowers. "We'll tell the doc that you shot yourself accidentally."

"Oh! It hurts like blazes! How long will it take you to find a doctor?" groaned Luff.

"Dunno," replied Sam. "There's a village about six miles down, you know."

"It'll be mornin' before we get there. Curse the luck! I wish I knew who it was that plugged me. I'd fix him for keeps."

In the meantime Hal watched until he saw Sam make off in the boat in the gloom, and he came to the conclusion that there would be no further trouble from the rascals that night at any rate.

As to the fate of Luff, whom he knew he had hit, and his companion whom the rascal had knocked into the river, he knew nothing, but he did not believe they were drowned.

If they were he couldn't help it. He had acted as his duty suggested, and his conscience did not trouble him in the least. The night watchman had heard the shot and was looking out of the window when Hal approached the factory.

"Who is there?" asked the watchman, not recognizing the boy in the dark.

"I'm Harry Harmon."

"Why, I thought you were in bed by this time. Who fired that shot?"

"I did."

His reply astonished the night watchman.

"Were you attacked by those rascals you warned me to look out for?"

"No; but I discovered them climbing up the water wheel, and as it was clearly their intention to break into the factory and rob the safe, for here is their kit of tools, why, I determined to discourage the scheme, and was lucky enough to succeed. There were three of them. I wounded one of them, and he fell into the river, carrying one

of his companions with him. The third one made off in the boat. Here, pull this bag in by the window and leave it in a corner of the shipping room. I'm going to bed now, for I guess you won't be troubled by those ruffians to-night."

Hal bade the watchman good-night, returned to the cottage and was soon in bed.

Now that his mind was at ease about the factory, his tired body asserted its rights and he was soon asleep. Sam awakened him at the usual time next morning.

"I wish this was Sunday instead of Saturday morning," Hal said with a yawn and stretch.

"So do I," replied Sam.

"Oh, you had a full night's rest. I didn't get to bunk till after one this morning."

"Is that so? I don't wonder you feel as if you didn't want to get up. Did you work as late as that?"

"No. Larry and I were the last to get away. We left about midnight."

"Then you didn't come straight here and turn in."

"I came here, but for reasons I went out again," replied Hal.

"Went out again?" cried Sam. "What for?"

"To save the office from being entered by some burglarious rascals who had designs on the office safe."

"The dickens you say!" exclaimed Sam, much astonished.

"They were the same chaps who attacked your uncle on the road the day I made his acquaintance, with the addition of the fellow who shot Constable Allen and rescued his pal."

"You don't mean it."

"I do mean it. They might have pulled off the trick if I hadn't seen two of them looking in through the shipping room window while Larry and I were sewing up the last of the bundles that are to go to the station this morning. I recognized them, and knew that their presence about the factory meant no good. I warned the night watchman to be more than usually vigilant, but after I came to the house, it struck me that such hard rascals would be more than a match for old man Williams. I knew that Mr. Green had the money for his payroll in the safe, and the more I considered the matter the more certain I became that those chaps would manage in some way to get into the factory, put Williams out of business, and break into the safe if they had the instruments to do it with."

"So you went back to help the watchman out?"

"That was my idea, but it happened that things worked out differently. Listen and I'll tell you what really did happen last night."

While dressing and washing Hal told Sam how he discovered and routed the three rascals as they were climbing up the water wheel to reach the top of the bank.

"Say, that was cleverly done. You seem to be a regular hoodoo for those men. This is the third time you've queered them."

"The third time! I don't think I did much to them the last time, when Larry and I had the mix-up with them in the road and they put the constable and his deputy out of business. The success was all on their side."

"You got back at them in good shape last night,

at any rate, and no doubt saved the factory pay money a second time. My uncle will be tickled to death."

At the breakfast table Hal related the incidents of the night, and greatly astonished Mr. Green, his sister and Hattie.

"You say you shot one of them?" said the rug manufacturer. "And he tumbled into the river, knocking one of his companions in with him?"

"Yes, sir."

"They must have been swept under the wheel and maybe drowned."

"I hope they didn't get drowned, sir, though they ain't entitled to much consideration," said Hal.

"The man you shot wouldn't have much show in the river at this point, where the bluff runs high, unless he wasn't hurt seriously, and was a good swimmer. Which one was it you fired at?" asked Mr. Green.

"I think it was the one we captured that day and appeared against at the justice's office. He appeared to be bossing things last night."

"I guess there is no doubt that you saved the factory from being entered last night. At any rate I shall give you the credit for it," said the rug manufacturer. "You've been of great service to me since I first met you, and I sha'n't forget it."

When Hal reached the factory he told Larry about the run-in he had had with the three men, and the Irish boy was much astonished. It wasn't long before the news was known to every one in the factory, and Hal became more of a hero than ever in the eyes of the girl operatives. Mr. Green notified Constable Allen about the matter, and the constable came out to hear Hal's story. In company with two deputies he started down the river to see if he could find any trace of the rascals.

CHAPTER VIII.—The Mystery of John Dean, Miser.

Constable Allen and his deputies returned after an unsuccessful quest, though they learned that three men, one of whom limped badly, were seen in the village of Chester, six miles down the river, at an early hour that morning. Later on it was learned that they visited the house of one of the village doctors, who extracted a bullet from the leg of the man who limped. After the wound was bandaged up the men left and were later on seen rowing down the river. No further trace was found of them. There was no doubt that these men were the ones whose plans Hal had frustrated, for their descriptions tallied with the appearance of Luff, Bowers and the rascal who escaped when Luff was captured.

Hal was pleased to learn that the man he shot had not been dangerously hurt, and that none of them had met with death through his agency. He didn't want any man's blood on his head, even if that man was a professional criminal. He wondered if they would come back later on and try again. It was possible, for they were nervy scoundrels, and on suggesting the possibility of such, Hal tried to persuade Mr. Green to go to the Carlin bank on Saturday morning instead of Friday afternoon.

"I should think you could do it just as well, sir, and it would do away with the risk of keeping several hundred dollars overnight in your old-fashioned office safe."

"I ain't lost nothin' yet, an I've been keepin' the pay money in the safe overnight these two years since I broke with the Rushville Bank," replied the old man.

"That may be, sir, but your past good-luck might have a turn at any time, and then you'd regret that you didn't follow my suggestion. You have seen the tools those chaps had in the bag which I captured, and if the rascals had had full swing the other night they could easily have blown open your safe and got away with all the money that was in it."

"I reckon with you around no one will steal my money," said Mr. Green, in a confident tone.

"I may not be so fortunate in detecting those chaps again, or any other of the same gentry, before they begin operations, so you mustn't put your trust in me unless you expect me to sit up Friday nights with the watchman."

"No, I don't expect you to sit up Friday nights," said the old man. "I reckon Williams can watch the place all right. However, I'll consider your suggestion, which I calculate is a good one, only I hate to make any change in the way I've been runnin' things."

Whether the old man thought it over or not he continued to visit his bank at Carlin on Friday afternoons and draw his money, but he took the precaution to carry a revolver with him on his trip, and kept his eyes about him on his return journey.

Hal had established himself very high in the good graces of Sam and his sister. To his great satisfaction he found that Hattie had no bear among the village lads, and so he lost no opportunity to make himself solid with her. He got into the habit of taking her for a walk of an evening, and on Sunday afternoon. Sometimes Sam went along with them, but more often he didn't, as he had a girl in the village who attracted him. During the month of August the factory shut down at three o'clock on Saturday, two hours earlier than the regular time.

There happened to be only four Saturdays in the month that year, but the old man chucked in the first Saturday of September to make up the five that his employees thought they were entitled to.

"Say, Hal," said Sam, as they were on their way to dinner on the first Saturday of the five, "you'll be through on time today, won't you?"

"Yes; work has been slow this week."

"Well, s'pose we take a boat and go for a row on the river when we get off?"

"That's a good deal like work on a hot afternoon like this, don't you think?"

"I'm willing to do most of the rowing. I don't get much exercise in the office."

"If you want to go real bad I'm willing to oblige you. Going up or down the river?"

"Down. I've a notion I'd like to visit Goat Island. That's about a mile from here."

"What for? To see the goats?" laughed Hal.

"No; there aren't any goats there."

"Why is it called Goat Island, then?"

"You've got me. It's always been known by

that name ever since I came here. Maybe there were goats on it once upon a time."

"Very likely. There must have been some reason for calling it by that name. How long have you lived here?"

"About ten years. There's a house on Goat Island which was occupied by an old miser named John Dean, who squatted on the place."

"John Dean!" exclaimed Hal. "I had an uncle named John Dean, who was said to be pretty well off. He was my mother's brother. She told me that he promised to leave all his money to her when he died. One day he packed up his traps and told her he was going to Chicago. That's the last we ever heard of him."

"Were you going to Chicago to try and find him?"

"No; it would be like hunting for a needle in a haystack, especially as I don't know for certain that he ever did go to Chicago, for he never wrote my mother to tell her that he got there. Besides, he's probably dead now. He was many years older than his sister."

"But if he died wouldn't he have left his money to your mother as he promised?"

"All I can tell you is that we never heard from him or his money."

"Who else did he have to leave it to?"

"Nobody that I know of. He wasn't likely to get married again at his age, and he had no children."

"If he died in Chicago worth anything his heirs would have been sought for, I should think."

"Perhaps."

"As your mother is dead you'd be entitled to whatever he left. If I were you I'd write to the Chicago authorities and make inquiries about your uncle. It will only cost you a two-cent stamp, and postage for a reply."

"I might do that," replied Hal, reflectively.

"I'd do it in a minute if I were in your place. It would be a fine thing for you if he left a good round sum of money and you got it."

"Supposing he's dead, of course. Some old men live till they dry up. Uncle John, as I remember him, looked like one of those kind. He was thin and wiry. Never sick a day in his life. Mother often said she believed he'd outlive her, notwithstanding that he was all of twenty years her senior."

"How old would he be if he was still alive?"

"Close on to seventy."

"That's pretty old," said Sam, as they walked into the house.

They ate their dinner and walked back to the factory.

"Say, Hal, I was thinking about what you told me about your uncle, and how you are not sure that he ever went to Chicago."

"Well, what about it?"

"I was wondering if the old miser, of the same name, who lived a long time on Goat Island, could by any possibility have been your uncle. He was thin and wiry in appearance, and about seventy years old."

"That so? When did he come to the island?" asked Hal, with some interest.

"My uncle can tell you, for he remembers the old fellow."

"When did he die?"

"He didn't die on the island. He left suddenly—disappeared without taking any of his traps with him. If he had money, as people always believed, of course, he took it away with him. He wouldn't be such a fool as to leave it behind."

"Not unless he was crazy."

"After he was missed—he used to row to the village once a week for supplies, and when he stopped coming the fact was noticed—the storekeeper with whom he dealt went over to the island to see if he was sick. The house, or shanty, rather looked as if he had just walked out and would return presently; but he never came back, and his duds are still there, just as he left them."

"When did that happen?"

"A short time before you came here—maybe a month."

"Perhaps he fell in the river and was drowned," said Hal.

"That's what my uncle thinks."

"Still in that case his body would have been found floating, or it would have turned up somewhere on either bank, I should think."

"The current is swift, and his body might have been carried a hundred miles before it came to the surface. If found so far from here we might never hear of it. It would be buried and that would end the matter."

"Was the shanty overhauled when he failed to turn up?"

"Yes; but not a cent of money was found. As he always had money to pay for what he bought that confirmed the idea that he had gone off suddenly, taking his funds with him, and as he did not remove any of his clothes, or other things, most of the people around here believe he will reappear some day in the near future. So to protect the old man's things against mischievous boys, or any tramp who might get to the island, the storekeeper boarded the door and windows up, and left a notice for the old man's eye if he comes back."

When Hal went to the office to get his money at closing time he held back until everybody else had been paid. As soon as Mr. Green handed him his pay he asked the factory owner if he knew anything about the old reputed miser of Goat Island.

"I saw him two or three times in the store where I trade. He was a man of about my size, only thinner and tougher. He looked as if he might live to be ninety, or even older. I judged he was seventy, but he was uncommonly active for his years. His name was John Dean, and he lived entirely alone on the island."

"He disappeared suddenly, Sam told me," said Hal.

"Yes. It's my opinion he fell into the river and was drowned; but most people in the village think he went away of his own accord intending to return. As he has been gone over six months, I think his return is very doubtful."

"Do you think he was really a miser?"

"There is no evidence to show that he had any more than enough money to pay his expenses, which were not very heavy, as he had only himself to provide for, and he lived rent-free."

"Maybe the reason he left so suddenly was because he ran out of all the money he had?"

"If he had left he would naturally have gone away in the boat he used. The boat was found

tioned to a stake in a cove near the shanty. That's why I feel sure something happened to him."

"But if he had been drowned, as you suggest, he would have left some little money behind him at any rate, don't you think?"

"I take it that he carried his money about on his person. I don't believe he had a great deal anyway."

"Then, of course, he couldn't have been a miser."

"Most likely not. The name seems to be applied indiscriminately, without real reason, to old people who live by themselves in a penurious way, due, nine times out of ten, to lack of money rather than a surplus of it," said the factory owner.

"Sam and I are thinking of rowing down to Goat Island this afternoon and taking a look at the shanty where the old man lived."

"If you think the visit worth the trouble there is nothing to prevent you going. You can't get inside, for the house is boarded up."

"Sam says he wants the exercise, and I'm willing to go along for company. I'm a bit interested too, for I had an uncle named John Dean, and your description of the island hermit fits him closely. He left Quincy, where mother and I lived, bag and baggage, about as unexpectedly as the miser left the island, and we never heard of him afterward. He told my mother that he was going to Chicago."

"Well, well," said the factory owner in a tone of interest. "When did your uncle leave Quincy?"

"About five years ago."

"Did he have any money?"

"Mother believed he was well off."

"John Dean of Goat Island came there about a year and a half ago. It would be remarkable if he proved to be your missing uncle."

"I should say so. If I could get in the house I might find something that would show me whether he was my uncle or not."

"Go and state the case to Mr. Jones, the storekeeper. He might go over and open up the shanty, or give you permission to do so yourself."

"Not this afternoon, as Sam is waiting for me. Even if John Dean proved to be my uncle, the fact would do me no good. He left little behind him, and there is nothing to show that he is dead."

"That's true," said Mr. Green, nodding his head, and so the convention ended, Hal hurrying outside to join the impatient Sam.

CHAPTER IX—Hal Finds the Miser of Goat Island Was His Uncle.

The boys embarked in a boat belonging to Mr. Green, Sam taking first spell at the oars, and starting off like a good fellow.

"Why do you pull so hard, Sam?" asked Hal, watching his exertions. "There'll be nothing left of you but a grease spot if you keep on at that rate. Why don't you take it easy? The current is in our favor, and would carry us to Goat Island without much effort on our part."

"Oh, I like to row," replied Sam.

"You'll have all the exercise you want on the way back, pulling against the tide."

"That's so," admitted Sam, easing up. "I didn't think about that."

"You want to learn to think if you expect to make a success of yourself in this world. Some day you will probably be boss of the rug factory, and then you'll find a lot to think about. You will have rivals to contend with, just as your uncle has now, and you'll have to be wide awake in order to get your share of the business."

"It's our advertisement that pulls the trade," replied Sam.

"Advertising is all right as far as it goes, but don't run away with the idea that it's the whole thing. I know a chap who went into the mail-order business. It looked awfully easy to him. He thought all he had to do was to advertise his specialties, then sit at his desk and amuse himself every day opening a stack of letters containing remittances for goods."

"How did he come out?"

"At the small end of the horn. He spent all his capital in advertising and stock to fill his expected orders. He did some business, but not enough to pay him for his time. In the end he busted up."

"It's hard to start a new business. My uncle's factory is well established. He is known all over the country. That makes all the difference in the world."

"I admit that. But you don't know how easily the best established business in the world can run down these strenuous days unless it's watched and coddled."

"You talk as if you knew a whole lot about it."

"I've read a lot on the subject, and have given it some study."

"You expect to go into business some day—when you get capital?"

"I do, though that won't be soon, for I am a poor boy at present, and poor boys don't accumulate capital fast."

"Save your money, and if my uncle leaves the business I'll let you buy an interest in it. I'd like to have you with me. I think you've got a better consideration," laughed Hal.

"Suppose you found your uncle, and he left you \$10,000, what would you do with it now? Put it in the bank?"

"I'd try to buy a half interest in your uncle's business."

"You would! If he sold it to you that would do me out," growled Sam.

"How would it? He could leave you the other half, then we'd be equal partners. Isn't a half interest enough for you?"

"I'd only make half what my uncle is making now."

"I'm afraid if you got the whole business you'd soon only be making half what your uncle is taking in."

"How so? Don't you suppose I know how to run the business? I've been keeping the books for two years, and I know all about things."

"You know how much it costs to advertise for a year, and what results you get from it?"

"Sure I do. We know pretty near how much trade we get from each advertisement."

"How do you keep track of that?"

"By the key number. Every paper we advertise in has a different key number."

"That's something new to me. What is the number?"

"It's in the address. All letters addressed 'Jabez Green, Rushville, Ill.' would reach us. But in order to keep tab on the value of a paper or magazine as an advertising medium for our business we add the words 'Department A' to one, 'Department B' to another, and so on through the alphabet as far as we go. When our mail comes in every morning I sort it out by departments. Then I get the advertising book and credit each newspaper with the number of replies bearing the department number of the advertisement inserted in it—see?"

"Sure. That's a great idea. I wonder who invented that scheme?"

"Some big advertising agency, I suppose. All big advertisers now use it with variations. It isn't practicable for all advertisers to use the word 'department,' so they work it differently. They may add an initial to the number of their business address, such as '123A Main Street.' Or they may add 'Box 10' or 'Suite 12' to the address. It counts for nothing with the post office."

"I see. You have taught me a new wrinkle. Thanks."

"You're welcome. You see I know something after all," grinned Sam.

"I've no doubt you know a whole lot, Sam. The key number and such things are merely necessary details in your uncle's business. Does your uncle depend wholly on advertising for business?"

"Yes."

"Making old carpet into rugs isn't all we do. We manufacture a lot of brand new rugs for people who I judge are dealers and sell them in their stores."

"That's right. We use a different kind of advertisement for that part of the business, and put it in a different class of papers—trade papers mostly."

"You don't employ any drummers, then?"

"No; but sometimes we have agents in different places."

"I know there are a number of big mail order houses in this country that do an immense business in the sale of rugs in connection with their other lines. Do you get any orders from them?"

"No. I don't think our plant is large enough to handle that trade at a living profit. Those houses aim to sell goods lower than regular dealers, and the manufacturer, to get their orders, has to bid bedrock figures. That leaves but a small margin of profit."

"Then if you were running your uncle's business you wouldn't try for that business?"

"No, sir, I wouldn't."

"Well, I would," replied Hal, promptly.

"Ho! You wouldn't make much then."

"Yes, I would."

"How would you?"

"I'd make a good average profit out of the size of the order. I believe in big contracts. I'd sooner take one large order, on a small margin, than a dozen or two small orders, on the regular margin. There's more in it. It's an application of the principle of large sales and small profits. The oftener a man can turn his capital over in a year the more money he can make. Paste that

in your hat, Sam. To be continued in our next, for here is Goat Island close ahead of us."

Sam turned around and looked, and then got a move on with the oars. In a few moments the boat glided into a little indentation, poked its nose on the sand and the boys landed. Hal, interested in the possibility that the man who was called the miser of Goat Island might possibly be his uncle, suggested that they visit the shanty right away. Sam was willing, and acting as guide soon piloted the way to the house.

"There isn't much to see after all," said Sam.

They peered through the cracks between the boards across the windows, but it was so dark inside that they could make out nothing but some shadowy pieces of furniture. They walked to the back of the shanty and found traces of a truck patch where John Dean had raised some vegetables the preceding year. The boys were looking at it when Hal caught sight of a glittering object in the dirt. He walked over and picked it up. It proved to be an old-fashioned heavy gold seal ring. Two initials, "J. D.," were cut in the flat stone. The moment Hal's eyes rested on it he uttered an exclamation.

"What's that you've found?" asked Sam.

"A seal ring, and one I've seen before."

"Where?"

"On the little finger of my uncle's left hand."

"Then John Dean, the miser of Goat Island—"

"Was without doubt my mother's brother, and my Uncle John," said Hal.

CHAPTER X.—An Astonishing Discovery.

"Well, if that doesn't beat the Dutch!" cried Sam.

"It is rather singular that my uncle should have been here for a year and a half, living the life of a recluse, and accumulating the reputation of a miser. Then a short time before I appear in Rushville he disappears as if the ground had swallowed him up."

"If you're sure that John Dean was your uncle then whatever is in the shanty belongs to you," said Sam.

"Not at all; not even if it was stacked full of money."

"Why not?"

"Because there is no evidence that John Dean is dead. His death would have to be proved beyond a doubt before his heirs would be entitled to touch his property."

"I don't see how it's going to be proved even if he really is dead."

"Nor I. The house has been looked over, I understand, so his dead body isn't in it. The only thing we can do is to look the island over to see if his remains are lying somewhere in the bushes. Your uncle told me that the boat Dean used was found at its moorings, where it ought not to be if he had left the island of his own accord. That is some evidence that he never did leave the said island unless he accidentally fell into the water and was swept away by the current. My uncle may have been stricken down with heart failure, or something else, while walking about the island, and died where he fell."

"Was he subject to such things?" asked Sam.

"Not to my knowledge, but lots of people have died from something going wrong with the heart who never showed any previous symptoms of it."

"I suppose so," said Sam, who had rather an indifferent knowledge on the subject.

"As we've got nothing better to do let's explore the island—it isn't so big."

"All right," agreed Sam.

They spent an hour strolling around, peering into all spots where a corpse might have escaped general observation, but there wasn't any sign of a dead body anywhere.

"He isn't on the island, dead or alive," said Sam, in a confident tone.

"He doesn't seem to be, I'll admit," replied Hal.

"That makes it certain that if he didn't fall into the river, he left the island by some other means than his own boat."

"Somebody might have touched at the island in a sailboat and taken him down the river at his request. In which case he may or may not turn up again in this neighborhood."

"But why should he abandon his traps?"

"One reason would be because he couldn't take them with him."

"Then he ought to have written to Mr. Jones, at whose store he traded, and told him to look after his things if he intended to return, or to dispose of them for what they would fetch if he didn't mean to come back. He might even have left a note in the shanty stating his intentions. But he hasn't done any of these things. It's my opinion he's dead, and I won't believe different unless he shows up pretty soon," said Sam.

They walked back to the shanty and stood looking at it.

"Let's take the boards off one of the windows and see if we can get inside," said Sam. "We can nail them on again when we come out."

Hal had no objection to making a forcible entry into the shanty, as he was curious to see what his uncle had left behind him in the way of property. They soon pried the boards off one of the windows, pushed up the sash and crawled inside one after the other. The furniture consisted of one camp-stool with a back, a table that could be folded up, a lounge which could be converted into a bed, a clock on a shelf, a small cooking stove, a double burner oil stove, and a number of other things. The entire outfit would have fetched very little at auction. There was a closet, shut off by a long curtain. An inspection of it disclosed a variety of cooking utensils, a small supply of crockery, knives, forks, etc., and an old-fashioned hair trunk, with a round top. I remember that old trunk well," said Hal. "It used to stand in my uncle's room at our house. It belonged to his father. It is a trunk of ancient vintage. You wouldn't find another like it in a coon's age."

"Open it and see what's in it. The key is in the lock," said Sam.

Hal raised the lid and both boys looked into it. There was no tray such as every modern trunk possesses. It was full of wearing apparel and various other odds and ends. Hal took everything out of it almost, but didn't find a paper, or even a memorandum book of any kind. He didn't expect to find any money, as he understood that Storekeeper Jones had made a diligent search of

the whole place with the view of removing whatever was valuable. Replacing the clothes and other things Hal shut the trunk. Examining the two shelves they found the old man's shaving outfit.

"It seems to me he would have carried that off with him if he left here voluntarily," said Hal. "There's his comb and brush, too. In fact there is hardly a thing missing. I'm beginning to believe with Mr. Green that something did happen to my uncle."

"You can gamble on it that he'll never be seen alive again," said Sam, nodding his head in a positive way.

"The whole matter seems a mystery to me. As there is no sign of money about it strikes me if he had as much as my mother thought he had he must have kept it on deposit in some bank, and carried the bank book around with him," said Hal.

"In that case it is likely to lie forever in the bank and you will never find out where it is."

"Well, I suppose that can't be helped. There are millions of dollars of unclaimed savings in the banks of this country."

Among the things on one of the shelves was a well-worn pack of cards.

"Playing solitaire was a favorite amusement with my uncle," said Hal. "He'd devote hours to it." That looks like the same old pack of cards he used at our house."

Hal picked the cards up and looked at them in a reminiscent kind of way. As he put them back he displaced a small, round Chinese ornament. It fell to the floor and rolled under the sofa bed.

"Let it stay there. It doesn't amount to anything," said Sam, walking over to the window.

"No; it won't take a minute to recover it by moving the lounge."

"I'll wait for you outside," and as Hal pulled out the lounge Sam climbed out of the window.

There wasn't much light in the room, about all that entered coming through the window the boys had opened. It was quite dark where the lounge stood, and after Hal pulled it out he couldn't see behind it. He got down on his hands and knees and began to feel for the runaway ornament.

"I guess I'll have to strike a match," he muttered.

He pulled a match out of his vest pocket where he always carried a number and reached out his hand to strike it on the wooden floor. His fingers came into contact with a metal ring. It was attached to the floor and resisted Hal's attempt to pick it up.

"Feels like an iron ring," thought Hal. "I wonder what it is doing here?"

He struck the match on the boards. When the light flared up he exclaimed, with some surprise:

"Why, it's a trap-door! There is a cellar under this house."

Inserting his fingers into the ring he pulled open the trap, which worked on hinges. Lighting a second match he looked down into the dark hole. A peculiarly unpleasant smell came up from below. A stationary ladder, of rude workmanship, led down into the place.

"I wonder what's down there?" Hal asked himself.

He was rather curious to learn, but hesitated to

venture down, owing to the disagreeable odor. He reached the burning match down at arm's length, and saw that the cellar was not over seven feet deep.

"I'm going down, anyway. I might as well see all that is to be seen."

He recollected that there was a candle in a candlestick on one of the shelves. He went and got it. Lighting the candle he proceeded to make his way down the ladder into the cellar. The atmosphere was so close and foul that the flame of the candle burned blue.

"There ought to be an opening from this cellar into the air," muttered Hal. "A close, dark cellar under a house is a disease breeder. It can't be that my uncle kept anything down here."

Reaching the ground, which was packed down earth, at the foot of the ladder, he turned around and held the candle above his head. As his eyes took in the place, only feebly illuminated by the rays of the candle, he gave a gasp. Right before him was a small wooden table at which sat the form of a man, his head bent over on his folded arms, as if he were asleep.

"My gracious!" ejaculated Hal, greatly startled by the sight.

He stared for some moments at the motionless figure. Then across his mind flashed the sudden thought.

It's my uncle, and he is dead. Has been dead for months, and is little better than a skeleton with his clothes on. What's that on the table in front of him? It's a pile of coins, I verily believe. Looks as if he was counting his money when death overtook him. With the old man's corpse here as proof of his death all he owned belongs to me."

The thought of coming into possession of a sum of money encouraged Hal to overcome the natural repugnance a person would feel under the circumstances to approach the dead. He walked slowly forward. The candle light showed that the money on the table was composed of \$20 gold coins, all new and bright looking. There were probably one hundred of them, representing a total value of \$2,000. Beside them was a common oil lamp which had burned out. Although the face of the corpse was hidden in his arms Hal had no doubt that it was the remains of his uncle he was gazing at.

"Poor old man," he breathed, with some emotion; "to think he should pass away from life in this cellar—alone and untended. And yet, judging by his attitude, I should say that he died in his sleep, without the least realization of his coming end. It was a painless and easy death, and it would have made little difference had there been a dozen willing friends in the shanty—he would not have needed their attention."

At that moment Hal heard Sam shouting in through the window.

"Where are you, Hal? What's keeping you?"

"There's Sam. Got impatient because I didn't come out. What a surprise I have to treat him to," said Hal.

As he was about to turn away to return above and tell Sam about the gruesome discovery he had made he saw what appeared to be a box on the other side of the table. He took a step or two forward and held down the light. It was a box,

a small, oblong one, with heavy brass corner pieces, and the cover stood open in a vertical position, held by two brass semi-circular arms.

To Hal's amazement it was almost filled with gold coin of all denominations, arranged in piles.

"My gracious!" he ejaculated. "My uncle was worth a pile of money—more than even my mother suspected. And this fortune is now mine—all mine. Just think of it! I'm no longer a poor boy, but a rich one. Gee! What luck!"

CHAPTER XI.—Forty-Five Thousand Dollars.

Hal was so tickled over the discovery he had made that he did not hear Sam re-enter through the window, nor notice his footsteps on the floor above his head. It was not until Sam, after looking around the room in vain for Hal, came over and, leaning upon the displaced lounge, cried out: "Where in thunder are you, Hal?" that the heir to John Dean's riches became aware of his presence in the shanty. Sam was greatly puzzled over the disappearance of his friend. He couldn't see the open trap-door in the dark, for the light of the candle held by Hal was shaded by his body, and therefore Sam had no idea of the presence of the trap. Wondering if something had happened to Hal behind the lounge, Sam yanked it further out into the room. Then as he started to investigate the space behind it he saw the flashing of a light that dimly revealed the open trap to his gaze.

"A trap-door!" he ejaculated. "Hal is down there with a light. Hello, Hal!"

"Hello!" replied Hal, coming up the ladder.

"I never heard that there was a cellar under this shanty," said Sam, as Hal paused with his head and shoulders out of the opening. "What's down there?"

"There's a whole lot down there?"

"A whole lot of what?"

"Money, for one thing."

"Money!" cried Sam, in an astonished tone.

"Yes; golden double eagles, eagles and smaller eagles. There must be thirty or forty thousand dollars altogether."

"Great Caesar! You're joking, aren't you?"

"No, there's no joke about it. It's the real stuff."

"I'm coming down to see it."

"All right. I was going to ask you to. Have you got good nerve?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because there is something else down here besides the money."

"Something else? What is it?"

"A dead body."

"Good Lord! Is it John Dean, your uncle?"

"You've guessed it."

"He's dead down there in the cellar?"

"Yes."

"He must look horrible by this time. I don't know whether I want to go down or not. I don't care to look at corpses, especially decaying ones."

"There's nothing horrible about him. You can't see his face because it's bent over and rests on his arms. However, you don't have to come down. I'll drag the box of money over here, and if you

find a rope we'll try and lift it up between us. It's bound to be pretty heavy hoisting. Probably the easiest way will be to send the coin up in sections."

Hal returned to the table, swept the gold that lay on it into the box, and then dragged the box, which took all his strength, over to the foot of the ladder.

"Here's a pot," said Sam. "Fill that and hand it up to me."

Hal took the pot, filled it with as much money as it would hold without running over, and passed it up to Sam, whose mouth fairly watered when he gazed on so many yellow boys, most of them \$20 pieces.

"Now hand me hown something else," said Hal.

"Here's a bowl. Your uncle was a miser, wasn't he?" said Sam. "And now you're rich enough to buy out half of the village."

"Hardly, Sam; but I'm no longer a poor boy."

"I should say not. Some people are born with hog luck."

"Meaning me, of course," chuckled Hal, lifting up the bowl full of coin to his companion. "How do you like the look of those yellow boys?"

"Say, don't call my attention to them that way, or I may be tempted to shut the trap on you and make you say down there to keep company with your dead uncle, while I could run off with your money. How would you like that?"

"I wouldn't like it; but I guess there isn't any danger of you doing it."

"Don't be so cocksure about it," returned Sam. "The sight of these gold pieces would turn many a person's head."

"That's true enough. Got any more vessels up there?"

"Yes, here's a tin pail," said Sam, passing it down.

In a few moments Hal sent it up full of coin.

"Now," he said, "if you will come part way down the ladder, and give me a lift with the box, I guess we can get it up between us."

Sam descended a few steps, and Hal exerting his muscles, raised the box high enough for him to grab the end handle. In that way they soon landed the box on the floor above. Then Hal shut down the trap with a feeling of relief that he was out of the charnel-like room. He was not afraid that his dead uncle would rise up and attempt to prevent him from taking away his money. The material wealth of this world has no attraction for the spirits of those who have passed away. But the presence of a dead person always carries with it a depressing influence, particularly in such a tomb-like place as the closed-in cellar. Therefore Hal was glad to get into daylight and the companionship of a living mortal like himself.

"I suppose you'll want to keep this box of money in the office safe until Monday, for you couldn't get it into any bank to-day; but I don't believe it will go in the safe."

"I could keep it under my bed. I think it will be safe enough there."

"The chances are it would; but it's an awful lot of money to take a risk on. Suppose the house were to catch fire and burn down between now and Monday morning the money would all be melted up into a chunk."

"There's about one chance in a thousand of such

a thing happening; and if it did the gold wouldn't lose much of its intrinsic value. I'd simply lose a small percentage of its value in coin."

"Suppose those crooks should turn up unexpectedly and burglarize the house?"

"That's another thousand to one chance. We haven't heard of those chaps for some months. They're not likely to come back here just at the very time I have this money in my possession."

"No, I don't think they are. I merely mentioned it as a possibility. You might turn the box over to the constable for safe keeping without telling him what is in it."

Hal shook his head.

"Do you want a job?" he said.

"You mean to help you take the money to the boat? I expect to lend you a hand whenever you are ready to start."

"I meant do you want to help me count the money? I'm curious to learn how much I'm worth."

"Sure I'll help you count it. I'll tackle what's in these utensils and you can count what's in the box," said Sam, with alacrity, for he, too, was eager to find out how much the coin footed up.

"The quickest way will be to dump it all out in a pile and divide the money into four parts—double eagles, eagles, half and quarter eagles. Then we'll count the number of the pieces in each pile, and a little figuring after that will give the total sum."

"All right," said Sam, and they got busy.

They emptied the contents of the utensils on the table and sorted the coins, using the pot for one denomination, the can for another, the bowl for a third, and another utensil for the smallest coins. When these were full they dumped them in four piles on the floor and began on the contents of the box. As soon as all the money was separated they started in to count the number of coins in each pile. This didn't take long, and the result was footed up.

"Forty-five thousand dollars," said Hal.

"Gee! That's more than my uncle is worth," said Sam. "And you came to this neighborhood six months ago looking like a tramp. Talk about luck! You're rolling in it."

"Yes, I admit I am very fortunate. If I hadn't knocked that Chinese ornament from the shelf, or if it hadn't rolled under the lounge, I never would have found my uncle's wealth, at least not this afternoon. The chances are his body and the money would have remained undisturbed in the cellar until the county authorities stepped in and sold the contents of the house. Then the trap-door would have been noticed and the cellar investigated, and I might have had a lot of trouble in making my claim to the money good."

"That's right. Now you've got your hands on the money you needn't give out how it came into your possession. If I were you I'd bank it in Carlin. My uncle will go with you and introduce you at his bank. If you put the money in the village bank, the fact would soon be known all over the place, and the authorities might contest your right to it till you had shown you were entitled to it. By banking it in Carlin, although it's the county seat, the fact that you found the money will not be so likely to get out. It can be

represented as a legacy that you have just come into, and that will be the truth, anyway."

"Your suggestion seems to be a good one. If your uncle also thinks it is the best plan I shall carry it out. Now let us get the money down to the boat and get back to Rushville."

"We'll put the empty box out of the window first and then dump the money into it, after which you can lock it up. It's going to be a mighty heavy load to carry to the boat, though."

"We'll try to manage it. I think by the time you have helped me land this box at the house that you will have earned \$100, so just help yourself to five of those double eagles, or ten eagles, as you prefer, and consider that you have put in a profitable afternoon."

"Do you mean that, Hal?" asked Sam, tickled to death at the idea of coming into possession of \$100 in gold.

"Certainly I do. You're entitled to something for your valuable services."

"You're a brick, and I'm much obliged to you. I'll take ten of the eagles."

Sam put the gold pieces in his pocket, after gazing at them with great satisfaction, and then the boys proceeded to begin the job of getting the money to the boat, which was some little distance away. Hal looked out of the window first to make sure that no one had landed on the island while they were in the shanty.

"The coast is clear, Sam. Get out and I'll pass you the box containing the money."

Ten minutes later Hal was outside himself, locking the box.

"Gee, what a load!" exclaimed Sam, lifting one end of the box.

"Yes, it's about the limit for us," admitted Hal, lifting the other end.

It was the toughest job they ever tackled getting the box down to the boat, but they accomplished it after stopping a dozen or more times to rest their arms. Placing it in the centre of the boat, the boys embarked, Hal taking to the oars this time, and they started back against the tide for the landing above the factory.

CHAPTER XII.—A Difficulty and Its Solution.

It was a long pull and a hard pull against the stream, but by taking turns at the oars the boys finally reached the landing. Fifteen minutes later they put the box down on the front porch where Mr. Green was reading the Rushville bi-weekly News in the fading light of early evening. The family had had their supper, but Hattie was keeping enough for the boys warm in the oven awaiting their return.

"What have you boys got there?" asked the factory owner. "You carry it as if it was heavy."

"You can bet it's heavy," replied Sam, mopping his forehead.

"Have you two been in John Dean's house on the island?"

"We have," replied Sam.

"And you found that box and brought it away with you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you are certain that the old man was your uncle?"

"Positive, sir."

"Well, as long as you can prove the fact I suppose you have the best right to look after his property. You had better call on Mr. Jones, the storekeeper, after supper, and tell him that you are John Dean's nephew."

"Yes, sir. And now I want to tell you that my uncle is dead."

"Dead! How do you know he is?"

"I discovered his corpse."

"The dickens, you did! Not in the house, for that was searched."

"Yes, in the house."

"Where could it have been that it escaped observation?"

"In the cellar."

"Is it possible? The storekeeper couldn't have looked there."

"Evidently he did not. And I'm not surprised. The entrance to it is by way of a trap-door that I found only by the merest accident. When my uncle last went down there he shut the trap. Probably he always closed it when he went down. As there is no way of ventilating the place except through the trap the foul air may have done him up at last. Or possibly he died of heart disease, brought on by the bad air of the cellar. At any rate I found him leaning across a table, just if he'd fallen asleep. He was practically a skeleton. I did not disturb him."

"You saw his face, I suppose, and recognized him?"

"No, I didn't see his face, but I recognized him nevertheless. Besides, I found a trunk and other things in the house that I knew belonged to my uncle. Then I picked this seal ring up outside. I've seen that on his hand many times."

"Well, well, so he is dead. I always supposed he was; but his disappearance was a great mystery. How he could have left the island without taking his boat, which he always used to come to the village in, puzzled me. Mr. Jones will be much astonished when you tell him how you found the old man's corpse. I suppose you found that box hidden somewhere in the house? It looks as if it contained something of value. Maybe you'll find money and papers in it."

"I have already seen what is in it. So has Sam."

"Is there any money?" asked Mr. Green, curiously.

"There is nothing else."

"My gracious! And you say it's heavy. It must be gold, and a lot of it."

"It's gold coin, that's why it's so heavy. Sam and I counted the contents and how much do you think it foots up?"

"I haven't any idea, but I should say quite a number of thousand dollars."

"Forty-five thousand."

"My stars! And you're the only heir the old fellow had?"

"I'm the last of the family."

"Didn't he leave any will?"

"I didn't find any."

"Did you look well?"

"There were no papers of any kind in his trunk, and though I didn't examine the bottom of this box still I took all the money out of it. If there was a will there I think I should have seen it."

"You'd better dump the money out and take

another look. If the old man left no will the authorities will take charge of this money and everything else that belonged to your uncle. It will go into the hands of the public officer whose business it is to wind up estates where the deceased has neglected to make a will. He will collect a fee in proportion to the value of the property involved. Your late uncle's property will prove quite a plum to him, and you will be out that amount. He will doubtless have himself appointed your guardian, and you will be subject to his authority until you come of age. He will probably make a good thing out of that, too."

"Say, is that right?" asked Hal, rather aghast at the idea of having a stranger put in control of his actions.

"That is the law, and there ain't no way of getting out of it."

"Yes, there is. Nobody but you, Sam and I know about this money. We can keep the matter mum."

"That would be acting against the law. If it was ever found out we would be punished for concealing the facts."

"You needn't have anything to do with it. You don't know that what I have told you about finding this box in my uncle's shanty on the island is true. You have only my word for it. You haven't seen the money. The law doesn't compel you to notify the authorities about what I have told you. I don't intend to have a guardian, particularly a stranger, to do me out of a bunch of my legacy. I'll take this box and leave it, just as it is with one of the Carlin banks for safe keeping, paying the bank whatever its charges are. The bank people won't inquire as to the nature of its contents. By and by, when everybody has forgotten about my uncle, I can use the money in the box to go into business with, and nobody need know how I came to be worth money, nor how much I'm worth."

"You can do that, I suppose, if you choose to take the risk," said Mr. Green. "I won't inquire into the matter any more, and I dare say Sam will keep his mouth shut on the subject."

"Sure I will," said Sam.

"Don't say anything about the box, or what is in it, to my sister or Hattie. What they don't know won't trouble them. I'll give you a letter of introduction to the cashier of the Carlin National Bank, explaining that you have a box containing something of value that you wish to place in their safe deposit vault. The charge will be fifty cents by the month or \$4 by the year. Your box and its contents will be safe as long as you leave it there. Nobody will inquire into it, and your secret will be your own."

"Thank you, Mr. Green. That suits me just right."

"You needn't even report the discovery you have made to-day. Let your uncle's body remain in the cellar where it is. It is practically buried in a kind of vault where it is likely to remain undisturbed for some time. It would not be a nice object to handle now, anyway. Yes, it is better that it should remain there. To make certain that it shall not be disturbed for some time I will lease the house and ground from the county authorities for a term of years. It has been advertised for lease several times, but nobody seems to want it. By adopting this plan we will be able to keep the matter entirely to our-

selves for the term of the lease at any rate, which I will have made long enough to cover your minority. I think that is the easiest and safest way out of the difficulty."

At that moment Hattie appeared at the door. "Aren't you hungry? I have your suppers waiting in the oven. I'd like you to come in and sit down, so I can get the things washed up."

"All right, Hattie, we'll be right in," said Hal. "Put the dishes on the table and we'll clean them up so that the work of washing them won't amount to a whole lot."

"What a nice box! Where did you get it?" she asked, looking at the brass-bound money chest.

"If we told you, then you'd know as much as we do about it," laughed Hal.

"Aren't you mean!" pouted the girl.

"Sure. I'm getting meaner every day. You don't know how mean I could be if I tried real hard."

"You ridiculous boy!" smiled the girl, making a face at him and running inside.

"Come, Sam, give me a lift up to our room," said Hal.

It was no easy job getting the box upstairs, but, of course, they got it up to their room by slow degrees and the expenditure of much muscular force. Then they went downstairs and were soon eating their supper.

CHAPTER XIII.—Another Hold-up That Failed.

Monday morning came around in due course, and Hal prepared to carry his box of money to the Carlin National Bank. Mr. Green decided to accompany him, not only as an added protection for the chest, but to see the county authorities about the lease of the island for alleged business purposes. Although Hal did not expect to be held up along the road, still he deemed it wise to carry his revolver with him. He said nothing to the factory owner about having it on his person, nor did Mr. Green tell him that he, too, carried a revolver. Sam helped carry the box downstairs and out to the wagon, and then went to the office as Hal and his uncle drove off.

Everything went well with them till they drew near a crossroad, about two miles from Carlin. Here the fields on either side were six or seven feet higher than the road itself, and they could only see at intervals under the lowest rail of the fence. Suddenly, without any warning there was a crash, one end of the wagon sagged down, and Hal nearly lost his balance on the seat. The brass-bound money box, which was under his feet, slid away and struck the tail board such a crack that the chain gave way, the board fell and the box shot out into the road, turning a complete somersault. It struck upon a stone, the catch of the lock gave way, the cover flew off and quite a lot of the gold pieces rolled out into the dust. Hal uttered an exclamation of dismay when he saw what had happened. Mr. Green reined in, and both quickly dismounted. Hal ran to his money box, while the factory owner examined his vehicle. The axle was not broken. The nut had come off and the wheel had worked loose until it came away from the end of the axle and then it fell, letting the end of the wagon down with a run. Leaving Hal to recover his gold Mr. Green

started back along the road to find the nut. In a few moments he was out of sight around the turn. Harry was picking up the money and returning it to the box when three tramps appeared on the scene.

"We want that coin, kid," said one of them in a husky voice, as he shook a club at the boy.

Hal looked up in a startled way. To his consternation he recognized the speaker as Lanky Luff, very much the worse for many weeks of tramping around the country. His companions, one of whom was just scaling the fence close at hand, proved to be Bill Bowers and Sam Snare. Evidently they thought they were about to make a big haul.

"You've got a lot of money in that box, sonny," grinned Luff, after a glance around to make sure no one was in sight. "As your wagon is broken down you can't carry it no further so we'll just give you a lift with it, and if you'll let us know your address we'll send you word where we've taken it to."

"You'll go about your business and leave me and the money alone if you know when you're well off," replied Hal, who had recovered his self-possession, jumping on his feet, and putting his hand in the pocket where his revolver was. The sight of the revolver paralyzed the three rascals. They were not expecting anything of the kind to be sprung on them, and they were taken by surprise. Lanky Luff's jocular deportment changed in a jiffy. He uttered an imprecation and raised his club as if to spring on the boy. Hal wasn't taking any chances, so he fired at Luff's arm. The bullet tore a hole through his wrist, and the club dropped from his hand. He uttered a howl of pain and rage.

"Down him, Sam," he cried.

Snare, however, wasn't taking any risks with a revolver and he held back. The only person in the party who was armed was Bowers, and he yanked out his gun. Hal saw his action and fired at him, putting a ball through the muscles of his arm, and he dropped his weapon with a cry. At that moment Mr. Green, who had found the nut and was returning when he heard the shooting, came running around the turn in the road. Suspecting trouble he had pulled out his revolver. Sam saw him coming, and aware that his two companions were wounded he began to think of number one. He turned around and made a dash for the fence. Hal didn't intend he should get away if he could prevent it, so he fired at Snare's leg. The bullet bored a hole through his left calf and he went down in the dirt with a howl. The appearance of the factory owner with a gun in his hand completed the discomfiture of the three rascals. Mr. Green didn't need to ask any questions to understand how matters stood. The scoundrels looked what they were.

"A hold-up, eh?" said the old man.

"Yes," replied Hal, "but the boot is on the other leg now."

"I see you've got a gun, and have the fellows where they can't do any mischief; but I don't see what we can do with them. We haven't any rope to tie them with, so I'm afraid we'll have to let them go."

Just then a wagon with two men in it swung around the turn.

"Here are reinforcements for us. I guess we'll be able to handle these chaps now," said Hal.

He bent down and shut the cover of his money box. Bowers took advantage of the movement to make a dash for the fence. Hal fired at him, but the bullet missed and Bowers rushed up the bank and crawled through the fence as Hal fired a second shot at him. The ball hit him somewhere, for he lost his grip and rolled back into the road, where he lay groaning. The newcomers proved to be a farmer and his hired hand. They stopped and Hal hurriedly explained the situation to them while Mr. Green kept Lanky Luff under the muzzle of his revolver. The farmer had some rope in his wagon, and so he and his hired man tied the three wounded rascals, who then were loaded on Mr. Green's wagon as soon as the wheel was replaced and the nut made secure. The factory owner and Hal then got up on the seat and drove toward town, followed by the other wagon. Mr. Green drove first to the police station, where the men were turned over to the authorities, charged with attempted highway robbery. Hal also charged Bowers with shooting Constable Allen, and Luff with shooting the deputy, some six months before.

The men were in due time tried, convicted and sent for stiff terms to the State prison, Sam Snare getting about half as much as the others. Hal deposited his gold in the safe deposit vault of the First National Bank, and when that business was settled he accompanied Mr. Green to the county building where the factory owner made application for a three years' lease of Goat Island. As the county was looking for an applicant he had no difficulty in getting the lease right away, and as soon as it was executed, he and Hal returned to Rushville.

CHAPTER XIV.—A Big Contract.

On the drive back Hal asked Mr. Green if he would sell him a half interest in his rug business.

"I like the business very much, and I see possibilities in it for making money that attract me," said Hal.

"Well, Harmon, you have made the suggestion I was about to make to you," replied the old man. "Since you told me that you had come into possession of \$45,000 I have been thinking of making you a proposition to join me. I am getting old and I would like to have a hustling associate like you. My nephew, Sam, although perfectly familiar with the details of the business, hasn't got the head to run the factory with success. I'd give him about one year to run it in the ground. I have been watching you closely since you've been in my employ, and I feel sure you could handle the business in good shape, even if something happened to me. If you've made up your mind that you'd like to buy a half interest I'll sell it to you, and Sam will eventually come into the other half, but I shall make it a condition that you are to be the managing partner when I step down and out."

"Yes, sir, I've made up my mind to go into the business if you will take me in," answered Hal.

"Then we will talk business this evening after work. I'll send for an appraiser and have the property valued. To that I will add the value of the goodwill, after we have agreed upon a fair

estimate. By that means we will reach an honest idea of what you ought to pay for a half interest."

According after supper that evening Hal and Mr. Green returned to the office together and went over the books. It took several evenings to reach the results aimed at. Hal was satisfied with the showing, and with the figure the rug manufacturer placed upon his business outside of the tangible property assets. These assets were later on determined by an appraiser, and on the first of September, Hal became the junior partner of the Rushville Rug Manufacturing Co., the new name of the concern. The new firm had not been in business much more than a month when Mr. Green was taken ill with some complicated liver trouble and died two weeks later.

When his will was read it was found that he had left his interest in the business to his sister and Sam in equal proportions. In the event of Mrs. Parker's death her interest in the business was to be divided between Sam and Hattie. Thus matters were arranged so that Hal would have the controlling interest unless Sam, after his mother's death, bought out his sister's interest and thus acquired all of his late uncle's half interest in the business. The shrewd old man, however, believed, from observation, that Hal would make a match with Hattie, and by marrying her acquire her share, thus giving him a five-eighths interest, leaving three-eighths to Sam.

That, however, was a matter for the future to decide. With the death of Mr. Green, Hal became the real managing head of the business, and he began at once to look for big business, intending to enlarge the plant in order to be able to handle it. Leaving the office in charge of Sam he started for Chicago to call on the heads of the big mail-order houses of that city with the view of submitting a bid for the stock they wanted in large quantities. He was successful in catching an order from one of the houses that made Sam gasp when he saw it.

"How in thunder are you going to fill that big contract?" he asked. "You must be crazy, Hal, to think you can get that work out on time."

"Don't you worry, Sam, I'll fill that contract within the stipulated time."

"How are you going to do it?"

"By enlarging the plant."

"That will take time."

"Not as much as you think. I've given out the contract to a Carlin builder to put up an addition to the factory, the same to be completed within a week."

"He'll have to work night and day with a good-sized force."

"I don't care how he works as long as he turns the addition over at the end of the week ready for the machinery."

"And will you have the machinery here then?"

"It should be here before then."

"Then you've ordered it?"

"Of course I have. Do you think I'm asleep?"

"But think what all this is going to cost. We haven't funds enough to stand for it?"

"You forget I've got \$30,000 in gold in that box of mine in the safe deposit vaults."

"That belongs to you, not to the rug manufacturing company."

"That makes no difference. I shall advance the money necessary to pay for the machinery and the addition to the factory, and charge the regular interest for it, taking the company's note without security."

"Well, you're running this business, but I don't believe taking big contracts are going to pay," replied Sam, clearly not satisfied with the idea of enlarging the business. "Mr. Green got along for twenty-five years with the factory as it stands and made a good living. We could do the same."

"I'm looking for more than a living. There are four of us in the business now, and I don't believe in sticking to a rut. I have advanced ideas in the rug making business. The machinery I have ordered is of the latest improved kind, and when it is installed and running it will make the old machines look like what they are—back numbers. One of the new machines will do the work of two of the old ones, and do it better. That will make a fifty per cent. saving of labor, power and space. The big contract I've taken will be executed right in the new addition, and will not interfere in any way with our regular work."

"But when the contract is finished we'll have the new plant idle on our hands until you can scare up another big order."

"No, we won't," replied Hal, confidently. "Before the contract is executed I'll have more orders in to keep it moving—maybe not at full swing, but working at a profit. This big contract is going to be a test of our ability to do as fine work in the rug line as can be produced in the country for the money. And it's going to give us the start I've been dreaming of. Your uncle's method of running his business was all right. He was an old man, and could not expect to live long enough to be run out by improved competition within the lines he confined himself to. It is different with us. We're young and must discount the future, or we'll get left. It is the small business enterprises that are being driven to the wall these days, that's why I believe in expansion."

"You are certainly full of hustle. Even if I had your money I never would have undertaken such a big contract as you have tackled. Why, you closed the matter just as if we had the facilities for beginning work at hand. Suppose something should happen to prevent the builder finishing the addition on time, or suppose the machinery you have bought should be smashed in a train wreck? We would be in a hole."

"Every one must take some chances in business; but the suppositions you have mentioned are only suppositions. I am dealing with facts, not suppositions. The chances of the things you have mentioned happening are about one in a hundred. If either one did occur I'd get around it somehow till matters were straightened out."

The result of the interview was that Sam's admiration for the business qualifications of his partner increased a hundred per cent., and his doubts gradually gave way to confidence.

He began to picture to himself the prosperous future that his late uncle's business was merely the starting point of in the hands of the new managing partner who had come to the village a poor boy less than a year before.

CHAPTER XV.—Conclusion.

Of course everybody saw that Hal had become the managing head of the factory after Mr. Green's death and wondered at it. Naturally they became inquisitive over the matter and tried to find out how this thing had come about. Sam was asked and so were Mrs. Parker and Hattie, but they had nothing to say on the subject. From a business point of view the village was elated over the extension of the rug business, for it was sure to add to the importance of Rushville. The Rushville News spoke about it, and advised that a committee be formed to call on the president of the railroad company, and try and get that company to build a branch line from Carlin to the village. The editor pointed out that such a line was bound to give the village a big boost, and bring other manufacturing interests to the place.

The committee was formed and called at the company's offices in Chicago, only to learn that the proposition had already been brought to that official's attention by Hal Harmon when he was in that city, and that the matter would shortly be submitted to the directors, a representative of the company being now engaged in investigating the points advanced by Hal.

Evidently Hal had the interests of the village as well as his own in view, and was not letting the grass grow under his feet in his efforts to help both. Hal was a mighty busy boy nowadays. He kept his eye on everything connected with the working of the factory. His great object was to save time. Every minute counted with him, particularly in the execution of the big contract he had on hand. The work was to be delivered in Chicago in instalments, but the last of it had to be landed at the mail-order house on a certain day, or the rug company would forfeit a certain sum for every day of delay.

He had taken the contract on such a narrow margin, that a week's delay would wipe out the profit of the work. He would have taken the contract on no profit at all in order to get it, for if the work was produced in time and according to specifications, it would prove an opening wedge in the direction he was aiming at. He was now bucking against big interests, but he was satisfied that he could hold his own against competition. If the opposition tried to do him up by bidding below cost he would let them, and fall back on the line of trade worked up by Mr. Green until they got tired of that kind of business, when he would jump right in and bid against them again.

The new up-to-date machinery made things hum in the factory. It turned the rugs out in fine shape like clockwork. The machines were worth every cent they cost, and it was a pretty stiff sum. At the end of two weeks Hal was able to get a line on his output, and he told Sam that it came up to his anticipations.

As Sam couldn't handle all the clerical labor that fell on his shoulders, Hal secured a capable assistant to help him out.

We may as well say that one of the first things Hal did before he got the contract was to buy a new modern safe for the office, to take the place of the antiquated one which Mr. Green had used

for so many years. He also removed the bulk of the firm's bank account from Carlin to the village bank. All checks, however, had to be signed by Sam's mother. She was executrix under the old man's will, and to make things run smoothly was made the treasurer of the firm, but the position was merely nominal of course. Hal wasn't so wrapped up in business that he couldn't give some attention to Hattie after his day's work was done. He and the girl got on famously together, and it was the opinion of Sam and his mother that Hattie would eventually become Mrs. Harry Harmon. As the big contract drew near its end, and even the doubtful Sam admitted that everything pointed to its completion within the time limit, Hal made a flying trip East to certain houses that handled large quantities of rugs. He returned with orders enough to keep the plant moving for another three months. The material for these orders was delivered at the factory some days before the last rug of the big contract was finished. So when the contract was done the new orders were got under way without the least delay.

Soon after the last instalment of the contract was delivered in Chicago, the firm received a complimentary letter from the mail order house, enclosing its check covering the final payment, and promising future orders. From that time on the Rushville Rug Manufacturing Company had all the work it could handle and the firm made money in a way that would have opened old Mr. Green's eyes had he come to life. During the three years that passed before either of the boys became of age the firm paid an annual rental for Goat Island, but made no use of it. During all that time the house remained shut up, and as an extra precaution Hal had the trap-door communicating with the cellar nailed up. Shortly before the day set for Hal's marriage to Hattie he reported the "discovery" of old John Dean's body in the cellar, and declared that the man was his uncle. The dead man was now reduced to an actual skeleton, and Hal had him quietly buried in the village churchyard. About this time he and Sam converted the firm into a close corporation, and Hal took out the amount of his loan to the firm in stock of the company. Thus he secured a three-quarters interest in the new concern, the success of which was built up on the big contract Hal secured at the start. Having reached the end of our story nothing remains but to draw the curtain upon the poor boy who won.

Next week's issue will contain "BENSON'S NEW BOY: OR, WHOOPING UP THE WALL STREET MARKET."



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Ninety Degrees South

or, Lost in the Land of Ice

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XII.—(Continued)

"Well, he began to," said the girl, "but I cut him off. I was never so mad in all my life. The idea that he should be the first!"

"Well, he won't have any chance now," said Phil. "I wanted to do it, but—Well, you know I have been busy, and I wasn't quite sure that—What are you laughing at?"

"I think you're a humbug," said Sadie. "Didn't you know that I liked you a lot? Do you mean to say that you didn't know that—"

"I think I do now," cried Phil, laughing and kissing the provoking girl again. "At any rate, I know I think a lot of you, and if we ever get out of this land of ice I'll make you my wife, as sure as I live."

At that moment the ship's bell struck, and Phil said:

"I must go to work and you ought not to be out here in the cold. Come, the others will miss us."

"Uncle Jerry won't, but Dick might," laughed Sadie, and then they went inside, where the girl's blushes gave Dick a fairly good idea of what had happened during her brief absence.

As the two went in, Wills came out from behind a door and muttered:

"H'm! So she prefers him to me, does she? Look out for yourself, Mr. Phil Freeman, for now, more than ever, I'm bound to carry out my instructions. You'd be glad to know who give them, I reckon, and a bit surprised, too, I don't doubt."

Another month went by and the twilight faded away and darkness took its place.

They were now within two hundred miles of the Pole, having taken advantage of every favorable wind, but these two hundred seemed the worst to overcome of all.

They were not in peril of the ice, but it lay all around them in towering masses, and seemed to most effectually bar their progress.

They were in a land of ice, but there was other land, too, and Captain Essex was in high hopes that it extended as far as ninety degrees south, and had in mind an expedition across it in case the weather were favorable.

They had come upon rocks and great granite bluffs, against which the waves dashed furiously, and had at length found a sheltered cove where they were free from both surf and ice, and here they determined to wait until an opportunity offered to continue their journey, either by land or by water, whichever proved most feasible.

In their land-locked harbor they were free from the wind, and had no fear of the ice crowding in upon them, the stranded bergs at the entrance to the cove preventing the field of ice from encroaching upon them.

From the water's edge to the bluffs extended a strip of beach a hundred yards wide, and at one point a pass led through the bluffs to the country beyond, and as soon as it was possible Captain Essex meant to explore this.

Since getting into his haven of safety, however, the weather had been most unfavorable and the expedition had been deterred.

There had been violent snow-storms which had seemed to blot out all things, the wind outside had blown in gales and the darkness had been intense, so that, all things considered, it was useless to think of leaving the ship.

The searchlight showed them the ice in front and the bluffs behind, but this was all the light they had for days.

Phil and Sadie were happy in each other's company, and the time did not hang heavy on their hands, but it would have been otherwise with the crew if Captain Essex had not continually provided for their amusement and entertainment.

He gave the men books to read, he sent them out on the ice every day for exercise, he got up minstrel entertainment to amuse them, he gave them amusing talks nearly every evening, and tried in every way to make the time pass pleasantly.

The men were generally satisfied, but there were some who were not, and Wills had gradually added to this number, so that he had nearly half the ship's company ready to serve him, and was trying every day to increase the number.

At last the weather grew better, although it was still intensely cold, but as the moon was full; and there were no indications of storms, the captain determined to explore the interior.

He took the second mate and a dozen men, the professor and Dick Foster, leaving on the Pioneer Mr. Wills, Phil, Sadie and four or five men, quite enough to manage it.

The professor was deeply interested in the expedition, and nothing could persuade him to remain behind.

Sadie declared that she ought to go along to take care of him, and it is more than likely that she would have joined the expedition if Phil had been with it, but, as he was not, she was quite willing to remain behind.

They set out from the ship and struck at once for the pass through the bluffs.

"Good-by, old man," said Dick. "We will have a lot to tell you when we return to the old ship."

Alas, none of them would ever see the ship again, and some were destined not to return at all.

CHAPTER XIII.—In Fearful Peril.

The explorers had been absent four days, and Phil and Sadie were anxiously awaiting their return.

The captain had not set any definite time for his coming back to the ship, and Phil could not say, therefore, that he was exceeding his stay, although at the same time he could not help feeling anxious.

Mr. Wills had had very little to say, either to him or to any one else for the first two days, but on the third he began to make sneering remarks, and to say that the right man had not headed the expedition.

Later in the day he hinted that Captain Essex did not mean to return, and that they might as well give him up.

"What nonsense are you talking, Mr. Wills?" said Sadie, with considerable spirit. "Where would the captain go if he did not come here? He has no ship, and it would be absurd for him to leave us. If he had taken boats it would be different. Then you could say that he might be going to leave us, though even then it would be a foolish move, as the ship is better than boats."

Wills glared at Sadie and answered in a surly tone:

"You don't know anything at all about it. What I meant was that he could not get back, and there was no use in our waiting for him. Just as soon as it breaks up here we'll take the ship and go in search of the Pole ourselves."

"Captain Harry Essex will come back, never fear," said Phil, "and if anybody finds the Pole, he will do it."

"Captain Harry Essex is not the only man in the world," sneered Wills. "If I had a ship of my own, I'll guarantee that I'd find it, without all this useless delay."

"It would be better to wait till Captain Essex returns, I should think," retorted Sadie, "before criticising him. It's much more manly to say things to one's face."

"Maybe you think I would not?" muttered Wills.

"You don't know what I think," said Sadie, and no more was said.

The next morning Wills was more open in his remarks concerning the absent captain, and declared that he had foolishly sacrificed the lives of all his party and that he would never return.

Some of the men expressed the same opinion, and were bitter toward the captain, when Phil cut them short by saying:

"You're a lot of mutinous ingrates, and you've no right to talk like that. Captain Essex will always look after his men, and it is foolish to talk as you do. If he isn't back for a week yet, I shall not give up hope."

"Shut up, all of you!" growled Wills. "I'm captain here, and I won't have all this squabbling. Mr. Freeman, you'd better look after your engines than go slanging decent men the way you've been doing."

Phil said nothing, but went below, while Sadie sought her room.

Steam was up, for it was necessary to keep the ship warm and to have the lights in order, and Phil now gave a look at the fires and saw that they were in proper condition.

He had just finished his work when Wills came into the engine-room.

There was always an evil look on the man's face, but just now it seemed to be intensified, and Phil knew instinctively that trouble was brewing.

The man had never looked so vengeful, and as he cast a sulky look at Phil from under his shaggy eyebrows, the boy saw such hate in the look that for an instant he turned pale and trembled.

Nerving himself, however, and resolving not to let the man see that he was at all affected by his presence, Phil sat down and said, carelessly:

"Well, have you seen any signs of them yet? We might turn the searchlight in their direction as a guide to them, in case they are coming."

"Yes, you might start her up, I suppose," growled Wills. "Set your dynamos going and get on a better head of steam. You haven't enough."

"There is enough to run the dynamos with," said Phil, "and that is all we need."

"I say there isn't," snarled Wills, crossing the room to the furnace and opening the draughts.

"I have just fixed the fires, sir," said Phil impatiently, "and they don't need any further attention."

For answer Wills put on the draughts and then suddenly turned upon the boy with the look of a madman, his eyes glistening, his jaws working convulsively, and a thin foam appearing upon his bloodless lips.

Phil was really terrified, for now the man had all the appearance of a wild animal, all the looks of a demon, all the fierce, uncontrollable passion of a maniac.

Terrified as he was, however, the boy did not lose his coolness nor his courage, but backing slowly toward the door, kept his eyes fixed upon the man who he now realized was bent upon killing him.

Wills evidently saw that he was trying to escape, and with a fierce hiss he suddenly sprang upon the boy, seized him in both arms and dragged him into the smaller room where the dynamo was.

Throwing him upon a bench, the man knelt with one knee upon his chest, while he reached for a rope thrown over a tool-chest near at hand.

Phil struggled to escape, but the man held him tight, and then, seizing his arms, forced them behind him and held them down while he took the rope and began to uncoil it.

"You've given me trouble enough," he hissed, "and now I am going to get rid of you. You'll make the fires burn all the brighter when I throw you in."

"In heaven's name, man, what would you do?" cried Phil, struggling to escape.

"Kill you!" hissed Wills. "I am paid to do it, and I've a score of my own to settle besides."

Then he began winding the rope around the boy's body, when suddenly a warning hiss from the engine-room told him that the pressure of steam was growing dangerously high.

He suddenly sprang up, dealt Phil a blow that stunned him, and rushed into the engine-room.

"That will do as well!" he snarled, as he fastened down all the safety-valves and increased the draughts.

Then locking the door, which was covered with a heavy wire netting over the plate-glass of the upper half, he rushed out, locking the door of the smaller room which led to the passage outside.

Phil presently recovered, sprang to his feet, threw off the ropes around him, which were not yet tied, and ran to the door of the engine-room.

The register showed him that the danger point had been passed, and that unless the valves were opened and the steam shut off, there would inevitably be a terrible explosion.

He tried the door, found it locked, knew that he could not break through the heavy wire netting, so as to break the glass and force the lock, and realized that nothing could be done.

(To be continued)

Fame and Fortune Weekly

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 30, 1927

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

SOVIET SELLS CHURCH BELLS FOR METAL

The Soviet Government has turned to melting church bells.

A Russian merchant ship docked recently at Havre with a load of bells which had been taken from churches in all parts of Russia.

Though some of them were of magnificent workmanship, they had all been shattered and bored with holes, so as to avoid payment of duty, since they were destined to be sold for the metal they contain.

IOWAN BIDS DIME FOR BUGGY AND DRIVES AWAY WITH IT

There will be at least one buggy on the newly paved highways of Iowa next Spring, drawn by a horse that is known as "some stepper."

Floyd Foss, who lives near Maynard, had a closing out sale recently. Among the objects offered by the auctioneer was a four-wheeled buggy.

"What am I offered?" he cried.

"One dime," roared some one in the crowd.

"Do I hear any more bids?"

"You do not," replied the crowd in chorus.

"Sold," shouted the auctioneer, pointing an accusing finger at a man in the crowd. The buyer paid his dime, hitched a good-looking mare to the buggy and drove away.

LONDON INSTALMENT BUYERS CELEBRATE "PAID-UP PARTIES"

"Paid-up" parties are the latest fads among Londoners. It is not everybody who knows what a "paid-up-party" is, and at least one person was astounded to receive the following invitation:

"Please come to a 'Paid-with-thanks' party at on Saturday. Music and dancing.

Ring up to inquire just what it meant the following explanation was given:

"It's just a little friendly gathering to celebrate the fact that all the instalments have been paid on the furniture and piano. I'm having another one next January to rejoice over the last payment on the motor-car."

In view of the growing popularity of buying furniture and motor cars on the instalment plan, there will probably be a large increase in paid-with-thanks parties this season.

REINDEER HERDS MAKE FORTUNES FOR ESKIMOS

A reindeer round-up, the first of its kind, will soon take place in Akiak, Alaska. Since the introduction of reindeer into Alaska, some forty years ago, the animals have multiplied greatly, and it is estimated that they now number 500,000. Some of the herds are so large that their owners cannot keep count. It is said that if another market is not found soon the Alaskan ranges will be badly overstocked.

Forty years ago, when Dr. Sheldon Jackson, representing the United States Bureau of Education, visited Alaska to gather information for the establishment of schools there, he observed that many Eskimos were barely existing on scanty supplies of whale, seal and walrus meat.

Upon his return to Washington, Dr. Jackson suggested that appropriations be made for the importation of reindeer into Alaska. Three years later Congress, realizing the importance of such a move and following the lead of private efforts that had already begun to bear fruit, appropriated \$6,000. Additional appropriations varying from \$5,000 to \$25,000 have since been made.

Reindeer provide work for many Eskimos and bring wealth to some. The United States uses each year an increasing amount of reindeer meat. Between 1918 and 1925 more than 1,500,000 pounds were shipped from Alaska, principally to the United States.

TROUT OR LIVER MUST COME OFF THE MENUS

John W. Titcomb, Superintendent of the Connecticut State Department of Fisheries and Game, speaking recently at the fourteenth national game conference under the auspices of the American Game Protective Association, at the Hotel Pennsylvania, declared that Americans must soon choose between liver and salmon and trout as articles of diet.

"If the American people continue to eat liver there will soon be a dearth of salmon and trout," said Mr. Titcomb, "because it will be too expensive to use liver as food in the fish hatcheries." He did not say whether he thought it more important to feed liver to fish or to people.

Paul F. Redington, Chief of the United States Bureau of Biological Survey, said the ordinary rabbit was the carrier of a frequently fatal disease called "tularemia." He said that cases in which human beings had contracted this disease from rabbits had been recorded in all States except Washington, New Jersey, Delaware and the New England States.

The conference ended with a dinner at the Pennsylvania. Officers elected were George D. Pratt, New York, Chairman; Alva Klapp, Kansas, First Vice Chairman; E. Le Compte, Maryland, Second Vice Chairman; W. W. Cory, Canada, Third Vice Chairman; W. L. Finley, Oregon, Fourth Vice Chairman; Newbold I. Herrick, New York, Treasurer; Carlos Avery, New York, Secretary.

The Three Letters

I was sent over to Brooklyn one morning about three years ago to the residence of Mrs. Floyd, a wealthy widow, who lived in grand style in an elegant mansion on the Heights.

Mrs. Floyd had been murdered the night before in the most brutal manner.

She had been dragged from her bed and stabbed in a dozen places.

She was found lying upon the floor several feet from her bed, in the morning, by her niece, a young lady whom she had adopted as her daughter, and who had lived with her for several years.

I was required to find the murderer, if possible.

On my arrival at the mansion I was ushered into the room where lay the body of the murdered woman.

Everything was exactly as the young lady had found it, except that the body of Mrs. Floyd had been laid upon the bed.

Evidently the poor woman had struggled hard for her life.

Several articles of furniture were upturned, and the carpet was stained.

"Have you any idea at what hour the murder took place?" I inquired of Miss Ward, the niece, who conducted me to the room.

"No, sir," was her tearful reply. "No one in the house heard anything during the night. All, with the exception of myself, sleep on the top floor of the house. I sleep in the room directly above this; but I heard no noise whatever."

I began a search of the apartment, and was soon rewarded by finding three letters, which had apparently fallen from the murderer's pocket.

They were lying under one of the overturned chairs.

I read the directions upon the envelopes.

It was "Charles R. Stoddard, No.— Fulton street, Brooklyn."

I put the letters in my pocket.

Then I summoned Miss Ward, who had left the room.

When she appeared I asked her:

"Do you know a person named Charles R. Stoddard?"

Her beautiful face paled instantly.

"I do, sir," she said, "but for heaven's sake why do you ask that at this dreadful time? What has he to do with this terrible affair?"

"Did your aunt approve of the match?" I asked.

For a moment she hesitated; then she replied:

"He is my affianced husband."

On hearing this a suspicion of how affairs stood at once entered my mind.

"Did your aunt approve of the match?" I asked.

"No, sir, she did not," was the reply. "But what has he to do with the murder?"

"That will presently appear, Miss Ward," I said. "And now allow me to ask, why did your aunt object?"

"Well, Mr. Clark, I will tell you. Charles, who is a young lawyer just beginning the practise of his profession, has one failing—a love of strong drink. Despite this I was willing to marry him, thinking that I would be able to reform him. But my aunt opposed this determination, and for-

bade me having anything to do with him. Her word was law with me, for since I was left an orphan, ten years ago, she has been to me all that a mother could be. So I bade Charles discontinue his visits to the house, though I did not break our engagement. I thought that I should in time be able to change my aunt's opinion of him, and he promised to aid me by abstaining entirely from strong drink. But, alas! he has not kept that promise, and I fear that his terrible passion has gained complete mastery of him. And now, Mr. Clark, that you know all, for goodness sake tell me why you have asked these questions?"

In reply I showed her the three letters, saying:

"I found these letters in the room not ten minutes ago, Miss Ward."

"Oh, sir," she gasped, "you suspect him of the crime! Mr. Clark, he is not guilty! He would be incapable of the act."

"Let us hope that such will prove to be the case, Miss Ward," I said. "If he is really innocent, rest assured he shall not suffer for the crime."

But in my own mind I was firmly convinced that Charles Stoddard was the murderer.

I went to the window.

The room was at the back of the house on the second story, and a grape arbor which extended to within three feet of the window-sill might have been the means by which the murderer entered his victim's room.

And that it had been, a brief examination of the grape vine soon convinced me.

Several of the tender branches were broken, and the leaves were crushed in a number of places.

Soon after making this discovery I took my departure and proceeded to the office of the young lawyer, Charles Stoddard.

I was so certain of his guilt that I determined to make the arrest at once.

I found Stoddard in his office alone.

He was a fine-looking young man, apparently about twenty-three or four years of age.

"Mr. Stoddard," I said "I want you."

"Who are you?" he said in astonishment.

"I am a detective, and I arrest you for the murder of Mrs. Floyd."

He sprang to his feet, an expression of blank amazement upon his face.

"Mrs. Floyd murdered!" he cried. "And I arrested for the crime!"

Was this acting?

If so the young man might have made a fortune upon the stage.

"I am not guilty, sir," he resumed. "Before heaven I swear it."

"You will have an opportunity of proving the truth of that statement shortly," I said.

In spite of myself my belief in his guilt began to weaken as I looked into his clear eyes, which unfalteringly met mine.

"I will go with you, sir," he said, "but for heaven's sake let me first explain to you that I lost these letters night before last."

"Lost them! How?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, I was intoxicated, so much so that I had to be carried home by a friend. While in this state I lost the letters in some way."

"Who was the friend who took you home?"

"Mr. Eldridge Dale, a well-known Fulton street merchant."

Well, Charles Stoddart submitted to his arrest without resistance, and in less than half an hour was in the Raymond street jail.

But somehow I was ill at ease.

I feared I had made a mistake.

However, if Stoddart were really innocent, I determined that I would find it out and bring the guilty party to justice.

I began a few inquiries about this Mr. Eldridge Dale, inquiries prompted by certain suspicions which had entered my mind.

He was, as Charles Stoddart had said, a well-known merchant.

He was a bachelor, and lived two doors from Mrs. Floyd's late residence.

He had the reputation of being quite wealthy, but my inquiries soon elicited the fact that he had been living beyond his means, and had mortgaged his house for ten thousand dollars.

This mortgage was due on the day following Mrs. Floyd's murder, and Mrs. Floyd was the holder of it.

On learning this I at once went to Mr. Dale's residence.

He was not in, but I secured admission to his room, where I began a search, the result of which will presently appear.

On leaving the house I went to Mr. Dale's office. I was admitted, and found the merchant to be a portly, fine-looking man of about thirty-five.

I introduced myself as the late Mrs. Floyd's lawyer, who was doing something toward settling up her business affairs.

"Well, it seems to me that you are in a great hurry," he growled. "You might wait until the woman is cold, anyhow. However, what can I do for you?"

"I would like to make a few inquiries about that mortgage on your house which is due to-day," I said.

"That mortgage was paid in full yesterday," he replied, "and is now in my possession."

"Oh, indeed! and how did it come in your possession?" I asked.

"How the deuce do you think?" he asked, apparently not liking the tone which I assumed.

"I'll tell you what I think," I said. "I think that you stole it after you murdered Mrs. Floyd."

He sprang to his feet, but immediately sank back into his chair, his face as pale as death.

"The fact is, Mr. Dale," I resumed, "I am a detective, and I know all about the matter. You stole those letters from Charles Stoddart's pocket when he was too drunk to be conscious of the fact. You dropped them upon the floor in Mrs. Floyd's room to make it appear that the young lawyer was guilty of the crime."

"Shall I tell you how the murder was committed? You gained access to Mrs. Floyd's room by climbing up the grape arbor. After the deed was done you retreated in the same way. The knife with which you committed the deed you hid in a drawer in your desk. You——"

"Hang you!" hissed Dale, springing to his feet, "you have found me out, I see, and you shall be well paid for your trouble."

He drew a revolver and leveled it at me.

But I knocked up the muzzle of the weapon, and the charge entered the ceiling.

Then I disarmed the villain, and with the assistance of a couple of his clerks, who, on hearing the report, rushed into the office, succeeded in overpowering him and slipping a pair of handcuffs upon his wrists, notwithstanding his desperate resistance.

Dale was tried and found guilty of the murder and sentenced to be hanged.

But he cheated the gallows by taking poison a few days before the time appointed for his execution.

Charles Stoddart, on being released, swore that he would never again touch a drop of liquor, and from that time to this he has kept his oath.

He is now the husband of Miss Ward, and has never ceased to be thankful for his lucky escape from the terrible fate to which he was so near being consigned through the instrumentality of the Three Letters.

WAMPUM EXHIBIT IN MUSEUM RECALLS OLD INDIAN MINT

Among the exhibits in the Indian exposition at the Newark Museum are specimens of wampum money made in a New Jersey factory that for four generations made Indian currency for use on the plains. The wampum mint of the Campbells at Pascack has long since fallen into ruin but for more than a hundred years it turned out the bead money of the Indian. Not until 1887 did it close its doors.

John Jacob Astor and other great fur traders of the early days were callers at the Campbell mint, where they purchased the wampum with which to buy the skins of beaver, bear and buffalo from the Indians of the north and west. Until the middle of the last century stores in the vicinity of Pascack accepted the wampum as currency for small accounts, knowing that the firm would always buy it back. It was made by the wives and daughters of farmers, under the Campbell's direction.

The decline of wampum as Indian currency commenced in 1830 and practically came to an end when the Government gave the Black Hills reservation to the Indians. Virtually all the Campbell wampum went to the prairies and mountains of the Far West as the red men of nearer regions had become accustomed to real money.

The famous wampum mint of Pascack was founded by John Campbell about 1775. From a private business endeavor in his own house it grew to a plant of its own. For black wampum the Campbells used to obtain clam shells by a long rowboat journey to the Long Island Coast. On returning with a load they laid the clams under the trees and invited the neighbors to eat them with the proviso that the shells be saved. When Washington Market was opened in New York City the Campbells contracted for all its empty clam shells. The conch shells from which the white wampum was made came as ballast from the West Indies to New York piers.

For four generations the Campbells carried on their wampum manufacture. Abraham Campbell, last of four brothers engaged in the trade, died in 1899.

GOOD READING

MUSSOLINI URGES ITALIANS TO FARM

Mussolini, among his plans for the new Italy, desires more people to be farmers. Such back-to-the-land movements, although often urged, are not always responded to with great ardor, but there seems to be a magic in Il Duce's persuasive power, for, according to a report received in this country from the American Consul at Naples, the rural population of Italy has increased 1,178,731 in the last decade. The total rural population is estimated at 10,264,328, which is a little more than a fourth of the total population of the country.

What proportion of this rural increase has occurred under Fascism is not stated, but it is believed that more progress in this direction has taken place in the last five years than in the first half of the decade.

WOMEN HEAVY WINNERS ON TRACK
THIS YEAR

To the women went most of the laurels of the past thoroughbred racing season. The active interest taken by women in horse racing is one of the sport's notable recent developments, although it receives very little attention.

Mrs. Payne Whitney's stable was the heaviest money winner on the New York tracks. Her horses were first in thirty-one races, second in forty-two and third in forty-nine, accounting for a total of \$172,469.

Mrs. John D. Hertz of Chicago finished the season with the distinction of owning the greatest individual winner, Anita Peabody, which realized \$111,905 for her owner. Anita Peabody running in a sportswoman's colors, not only was the first owned by a woman to be the leading filly of the season but is the second ever to establish herself at the top of the money-winning list, earning more than her predecessor—Samuel Hildreth's Novelty, which won \$72,630. Beside owning the ton money winner, Mrs. Hertz's stable finished fourth in earnings.

Previously the outstanding achievement of a turf woman was when Mrs. J. P. Coots won the Kentucky Derby with Black Gold. Anita Peabody's best single performance was her triumph in the historic Futurity, in which she brought \$91,000 to her owner. Mrs. Whitney's biggest individual winner was the magnificent steeplechaser, Jolly Roger. That great jumper of Mrs. Whitney's Green tree Stable won six races and accounted for \$63,075.

The greatest earnings ever made in a season were by the Rancocas Stable in 1925 and the same stable's Zev, of international race fame, similarly set a record for the greatest individual earnings, \$272,008.

WATER PIPES ATTEST TO WOOD'S
LONGEVITY

The fact that well-seasoned lumber used above and below grade in construction work, in some cases at least, is more durable and is longer lived than stone is probably little known by the average home builder. The longevity of wood wherever lumber has been used is well proved.

Only a few generations ago many wooden water pipes were laid below the surface in New York City and for many years supplied the water to buildings. Some of these old wooden service pipes were dug up in the lower east side some years ago, and notwithstanding they had been laid for over thirty-five years and in actual service during the earlier period they were found to be in a perfect state of preservation.

The late W. W. Cole, engineer, who some years ago was retained by Elmira interests to rehabilitate some of their street and electric lines, made a report on the preservation of wooden water pipes which had been excavated and which in their day supplied water to some of its citizens.

In the recent three-months tour of Continental Europe, England and Ireland Robert H. Sexton, Managing Director of the New York and Chicago Own Your Home Building and Equipment Expositions that are held in the Spring of each year, made a close study of the utility of all types of building material. "While it is a fact," said Mr. Sexton, "that there is comparatively little frame construction now going on in France, Italy, Holland, Belgium, England and Ireland, it is not due to the special influence or preference of other material but because of the scarcity of timber. However, there is abundant evidence of the use of wood in construction during the time the forests were available for the woodsman's axe."

MORE CARBON MONOXIDE IN STREET
AIR THAN INSIDE BUSES, STUDY
REVEALS

Dr. Louis I. Harris, Health Commissioner, made public recently the results of a study of pollution of the air in various parts of the city last May in which Surgeon General Hugh S. Cumming of the United States Health Service entered into an arrangement with him to ascertain if the amount of carbon monoxide gas discharged from the exhausts of motor vehicles here was sufficient to endanger the health of the community. Dr. Harris said a larger amount of gas was found in the atmosphere of the streets than inside the busses.

"Samples of air were analyzed in the busses of the City," Dr. Harris said. "They showed from fourteen to 102 parts of carbon monoxide per million, while samples of street air showed from twenty-four to 184 parts per million."

Tests were made in Delancey Street, Chambers Street, in the vicinity of the Pennsylvania Station, near 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue and in certain establishments on Fifth Avenue, some on the street level and some on the floor above.

"Carbon monoxide gas in the air," Dr. Harris said, "is capable of more or less seriously affecting the health of persons who inhale such air. It may produce dizziness, headache, sense of weakness, nausea, and, if people are exposed to it for any time, these symptoms may be accompanied by marked pallor."

The study is preliminary to additional studies that the Department of Health proposes to make to check up conditions as they are influenced by seasonal changes.

CURRENT NEWS

RELICS OF POLISH KING FOUND IN RUBBISH HEAP

The crown, sceptre and orb of Augustus the Strong, once King of Poland and Elector of Saxony, were found in a rubbish heap recently.

The symbols of power were discovered during cleaning operations in the Dresden Historical Museum, which houses relics of ancient days. The crown is of heavy silver and is studded with jewels, being the work of the famous goldsmith, Johann Klemm of Freiberg.

Augustus II, was born at Dresden in 1670 and died at Warsaw in 1733.

A BEGGARS' TRUST FOUND IN MOSCOW

A novelty has been discovered by the police a "beggars' trust" in Moscow, with an office, a President, functionaries and "union rules." The members number upward of 200, all from the Province of Kaluga, where begging is said to be studied as a lucrative profession. All receipts are divided weekly, according to a regular scale. The majority own farms in the country, where they support relatives.

The authorities say there are 8,000 beggars in Moscow, "mostly fakes and criminals," and promise a campaign of suppression.

A DINING CAR SCHOOL OPENED BY RAILROAD

A training school and experimental kitchen for the instruction of dining-car stewards, cooks and waiters has been opened by the Pennsylvania Railroad at Columbus, Ohio. An exact reproduction of the latest type of dining-car has been installed in the commissary building there, and classes are conducted under conditions as nearly as possible like those met on the road in actual service.

Expert chefs and a "professor of waiting" teach the fine art of cooking and serving to neophytes. Courtesy and details of personal appearance are also in the curriculum.

GENEVA COPS POLITE TO SPEED VIOLATORS

The seat of the League of Nations has more automobiles and more accidents from automobiles than any city of its size in the world.

Genevese authorities have issued new instructions to the police force whereby speed law violators always must be treated in courtly fashion.

"Never forget," says the circular issued by Mr. Zoller, the new and youthful Chief of Police, "that policemen who have to do with the public must always be calm, firm, correct, polite, serviceable and devoted."

A BOY'S LETTER TO MUSSOLINI BRINGS HIM GIFT OF A VIOLIN

Little Luigi di Martino, proud possessor of a violin sent to him by Premier Mussolini, is the happiest youngster in the local "Balilla" troupes, an organization much like the Boy Scouts of America.

A week or so ago Luigi heard that Il Duce

sought relaxation by playing the violin, and made bold to indite with his own chubby fist a letter to the chief of the Italian Government asking the boon of a discarded instrument. Premier Mussolini replied by sending the lad a violin just his own size, from which his parents cannot now separate him.

Luigi hugs his fiddle to his breast at night and rises early to play quavering notes on it. The neighbors do not dare to object because of the donor's high position.

FOOD CHEAPER IN EUROPE

A recent survey of food prices in Europe has disclosed that they are slightly lower than prices for the same food commodities in the United States, according to an announcement of the results of the survey recently by the National Industrial Conference Board.

A Philadelphia housewife who pays \$1 for a market basket of food, if making her purchases in corresponding circumstances in Paris and living as a Parisian in her circumstances would live, would have to pay only 70 cents to fill her market basket. "She would pay 90 cents in Rome, approximately 30 cents in Vienna, 75 cents in Stockholm and Berlin, 73 cents in London, 70 cents in Brussels and 60 cents in Amsterdam.

"These figures, however, are based primarily upon European standards of living," says the Conference Board's report, "and it is likely that the American living abroad, ordering exactly the same dinner in a Paris restaurant that he would eat at home, might even pay considerably more than at home."

CAMOUFLAGED GAS TANKS GREET NEW YORKERS ON THE EAST RIVER

A new fashion has appeared for the gas tank New Yorkers, used to the dull red of those huge reservoirs that cast their bulky shadows on the East River's bank, may well rub their eyes, beholding the giant cylinders of a new race of gas containers decked out in pastel tints. The artistically camouflaged gas tank is apparently a fixture.

This innovation was launched at College Point, Flushing, and has been imitated elsewhere. The stroller on Main Street may glance down the side street, on which a tank abuts, without even noticing that there is any tank there at all; but if he looks sharply he may observe that the trees have a solid background. The 3,000,000 cubic foot holder is one immense patchwork of pastel colored strips, one hue never extending more than a few feet in any direction. The effect is a harmoniously blended whole that merges into sky in a surprisingly inconspicuous way.

This is the work not of a contractor called in merely to preserve the holder from the weather, but of an artist who was asked to supply a restful and pleasing color scheme. The tank is of a new type, lately introduced from Europe, and the builders considered it worthy of unusual treatment. The artist designed a dress of blue, purple and purple-blue and devised a pattern indicating the shading.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

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